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THE STATUS OF EFL EDUCATION IN KOREAN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: FROM SOME TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
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ABSTRACT

This study is guided by six sets of research questions: (1) What have been the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the success be attributed? (2) What have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed? (3) What should be done to improve the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? (4) Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the successful aspects? To what factors can the success be attributed? (5) Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed? (6) What should be done to improve the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools?

The methodology of the study was comprised of four complementary parts: a "standardized open-ended survey" (SOS), in-person interviews, interviews via email correspondence, and a document search. The survey questions were open-ended to allow the respondents maximum freedom in their range of responses. Following the survey part of the study, some of the study participants who agreed to do so were interviewed in
person or, at their preference, interviewed through email correspondence. In addition, documents pertinent to the study were also collected and studied.

The study indicated that, while EFL education in Korean public elementary schools has great potential for success, it has a number of problematic areas that need to be addressed, including the following issues: an unclear vision of the curriculum; a widening of the gap in academic success between the richer and the poorer students; indications of "linguistic imperialism"; a lack of specialized training for the EFL teachers; prevalence of teachers' misconceptions about foreign language education.

Based on the themes that emerged in the study, recommendations were made, including the following areas: curricular reforms that emphasize a coherent long-term vision; co-development of the curriculum by policy makers, teachers, and the public; a truly communication-centered EFL curriculum that balances linguistic functions and forms; improving the training of the EFL teachers; greater cooperation/coordination within and between elementary schools and universities.

In summary, in addition to searching for ways to improve the EFL education in Korean elementary schools, by listening to, recording, and disseminating the voices of Korean teachers of EFL, this study attempted to give some of them overdue recognition for their professional contributions as individual human beings.
To God.

To the elementary-school teachers in Korea.

To my family.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I am also grateful to all the Korean teachers who participated in the study, formally and informally. Although too many to list individually here, I nevertheless want to sincerely thank them all.

I must also thank Kil-Joo Woo and Ju-Young Song for their thoroughly professional assistance. I am proud to call them colleagues and friends.

Lastly, words cannot adequately express my feelings for my family. Their sacrifices, unconditional support, and, most of all, their prayers...I received much more than I deserve.
VITA

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PUBLICATIONS


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this study is the works of people who, although writing about various subjects, shared one common goal: to bring to public attention the personal stories of socially neglected people. They strove to provide the means for silenced and invisible people to be seen and heard. People such as Jonathan Kozol and Robert Coles have inspired me and challenged me to become an advocate for socially undervalued people. Kozol and Coles continue to influence me, primarily in a spiritual way, but two other people, William Ayers and William Schubert, gave me the specific inspiration for this study.

Through the “The Teacher Lore Project,” which began at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1985, Ayers and Schubert have been integral parts of a program in which teachers share with the world what they know, feel, and believe about matters related to teaching. Ayers explains the rationale for the need to listen to teachers:

To say that teachers are the ones who understand, know, and can say [about teachers and teaching] seems so obvious that it is beneath reporting. But in the often odd, sometimes upside-down world of social research, the obvious news must be reported and repeated: The secret of teaching is to be found in the local detail
and the everyday life of teachers; teachers can be the richest and most useful source of knowledge about teaching; those who hope to understand teaching must turn at some point to teachers themselves. (1992, p. v).

Ayers's comments are very appropriate for teachers of any subject area, including EFL teachers in Korean elementary schools.

Regarding the value of "teacher lore," Schubert offers the following explanation:

Teacher lore includes stories about and by teachers. It portrays and interprets ways in which teachers deliberate and reflect and it portrays teachers in action. Teacher lore refers to knowledge, ideas, insights, feelings, and understandings of teachers as they reveal their guiding beliefs, share approaches, relate consequences of their teaching, offer aspects of their philosophy of teaching, and provide recommendations for educational policy makers. (1992, p. 9)

Like Ayers, Schubert points out that teachers and their stories are great sources of wisdom, and that those who listen to them, including educational policy makers, would learn much.

In short, this study essentially centers around listening to and learning from teachers. By creating an occasion for them to freely express themselves through a qualitative, open-ended survey and interviews, this study attempts to learn what Korean teachers of English (KTEs) in public elementary schools think and feel about EFL education, more specifically, about the curriculum and teacher development. It is hoped that future educational policies regarding EFL education in Korean elementary schools will include more of the wisdom of the KTEs.
EFL Education in Korea: A Brief Background

Public elementary-school education in Korea. In 1945, as a result of the victory by the Allied forces in World War II, Korea became liberated from Japanese colonial rule and established a new nation. A central part of the national policy by the newly founded Republic of Korea was establishing compulsory education for its citizens (Shim, 1979). According to the Korean Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (the MOE: The name of the Ministry changed in January 2001, from the “Ministry of Education” to the current name), as a result of governmental efforts, by the late-1960s, more than 98% of age-appropriate children in Korea were enrolled in elementary schools (1988), and that figure has been maintained into the mid-1990s (MOE, 1994).

Whereas the goal of the Korean government regarding elementary-school education was more quantitative in nature (i.e., increasing the number of student enrollment) during the 1950s through the 1970s, the government’s current goals focus more on improving the qualitative aspects, for example, lowering the teacher-student ratio and modernizing facilities (Lee, 1992). Another current concern in Korean education is developing a curriculum that reflects the newly emerging needs of Korea and its people. In Korea’s drive towards “internationalization,” two content areas have received particularly acute attention: computer literacy and English as a foreign language (EFL) (MOE, 1994).

English education in Korean elementary schools. Although EFL has long been an integral part of the national curriculum at the secondary level in Korea, it was not included in the curriculum at the primary level until 1997. (Strictly speaking, EFL instruction in public elementary schools has existed in Korea since 1981, but such EFL
programs prior to 1997 were small-scale and specialized extra-curricular activities (Kwon, 1997).)

Currently, EFL is not included in the curriculum for grades 1 and 2. In grades 3 through 6, EFL is one of ten content areas in the national curriculum. In the third and fourth grades, EFL is studied once a week, in one 40-minute period; in the fifth and sixth grades, it is studied twice per week, in two 40-minute periods. All content areas, including EFL, are usually taught by the “dam-im” (“homeroom”) teacher. In many cases, however, classes such as music, art, and EFL may be taught by specialized teachers. The current status of EFL education in Korean elementary schools will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Statement of the Problem

This study was initiated by the identification of three general problems. First of all, primarily because EFL has only been taught in Korean elementary schools since 1997, to date, relatively little research has been conducted in the area of EFL education in Korean elementary schools. Further, among the studies that have been conducted, not many have specifically focused on KTEs.

Secondly, another general shortcoming about the existing research on KTEs is the narrow range of the research methods used. A review of the literature showed that, to date, no qualitatively oriented study has been conducted that directly focuses on KTEs. The studies to date about KTEs (e.g., Jung, 1997; Kim, E. J., 1997; Kim, H. D. et al., 1997; Kim, J. C., 1993; Kim, Y. M., 1998; Lee, H. W., 1997; Min, 1993; Park, 1998) have almost exclusively been surveys that mainly consist of closed-ended items, which
inherently limit the range and depth of the responses to the items. Table 1 illustrates the inherently limiting nature of some actual closed-ended survey items. In addition, many of the studies have methodological problems. As a result, some of the research conducted to date about KTEs in elementary schools has only been of limited value, and, in some cases, has resulted in misleading findings, which in turn have led to inappropriate conclusions. These problems will be more specifically discussed in the following pages.

The first item in Table 1, about class size, exemplifies the limiting nature of the existing studies that are based on closed-ended surveys of KTEs. Through her survey, Kim (1997) found that 81.3% of the respondents stated that “a reasonable class size” should have less than 20 students. However, it cannot be known whether the respondents consider a “reasonable” class size to be 19, 15, 10, etc.
How many students per class [for TEFL] do you think is reasonable?
(1) Less than 20
(2) 20 to 30
(3) 30 to 40
(4) More than 40

From the list below, choose the one most important quality necessary for an elementary school English teacher.
(A) Accurate pronunciation
(B) A basic knowledge of English
(C) The ability to use English for in-class work
(D) A broad knowledge of teaching methods that would be fun for young children
(E) Knowledge about the effective application of teaching materials and facilities
(F) Experience in an English speaking country
(G) Other

When EFL education is introduced into elementary schools next year [1997] as a regular course, which of the following are you [the KTE-to-be] most concerned about?
A. The interference of EFL education to the learning of the Korean language.
B. The invasive effects of English to the education of the Korean culture.
C. The ability of the EFL teacher.
D. The inadequacies in teaching facilities.

Please write the number of each content according to the order of the importance.
[Regarding elementary-school English teachers' content knowledge, please number the following areas in the order of importance, with “1” being the most important.]
(1) General English conversation
(2) Classroom English
(3) English songs, games, and role plays [Songs, games, and role play in English]
(4) Pronunciation
(5) Actual elementary [school] English textbooks
(6) Teaching aids
(7) Teaching models
(8) Teaching method theories [Theories of teaching methodology]

Table 1: Examples of survey items from studies of Korean teachers of English. (The first item is from Kim, E. J., 1997. The second item is from Park, Y. W., 1998; it has been translated from Korean by this author. The third item is from Lee, 1997; it has also been translated from Korean by this author. The last item is from Jung, 1997; the information in brackets has been added to clarify the original text.)
The second through the last items in Table 1 illustrate not only the limiting nature of closed-ended survey items but also the dangers of reaching conclusions based on such survey items. Park (1998), for instance, based on the findings of his survey item (the second item in Table 1), stated that approximately 55% of the English teachers he studied thought that the most important quality necessary for elementary-school English teachers is "A broad knowledge of teaching methods that would be fun for young children." The second-most important quality was "The ability to use English for in-class work" (31%), followed by "Accurate pronunciation of English" (25%). In his publication, Park interpreted his findings at face value and made no qualifications about his survey item, namely, that the respondents were required to choose only one attribute from a predetermined list of seven (and one of the seven was "Other"). Park’s survey is an example of what I have termed "researcher-centered research," an investigation that focuses on what a researcher wants to know, but not necessarily on what the study participants want to say. The last two items in Table 1 are further – but by no means exhaustive – instances of "researcher-centered research" regarding Korean teachers of English.

"Researcher-centered research" relates to the third shortcoming about the existing research on KTEs. One of the most sensible ways of solving any problem is to include in the problem-solving process the people who most often and intimately deal with the problem. EFL education in Korean public schools clearly faces many problems, but a review of the accumulated research on this topic has indicated that, to date, the KTEs have not been sufficiently allowed an actively participatory role in the problem-solving process. In a previous study by the author (Lee, 1999), it was found that many KTEs felt...
that they had little if any influence on the educational policies mandated to them by the MOE. As a result, many of the KTEs suffered from low morale. According to the KTEs studied, this low morale manifested itself in the following forms: a general sense of powerlessness as a teacher; a specific lack of motivation to teach EFL; a strong resentment against teaching EFL; and a great amount of cynicism regarding support from the government, for example, about the government's inadequate provision of teaching materials and programs for professional development. For many Korean elementary-school teachers who have been ordered to teach EFL, a subject they have little expertise in, teaching EFL can be an almost unbearably heavy burden that too often creates feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy regarding their abilities as teachers, and some teachers have gone so far as to question their personal self-worth.

The idea of "researcher-centeredness" in "researcher-centered research" is not simply a methodological problem; it is related to the ethical issue of reciprocity. Researchers must be sensitive to the fact that, in the researcher-participant relationship, they are often in the "dominant" position, as compared to the participants, who are frequently in the "subordinate" position (Stanfield, 1993). Research must be a reciprocal endeavor (Fetterman, 1989; Patton, 1990); that is, researchers must not exploitative "mine" the participants for "nuggets" of information, then discard the participants after the information useful to their study is gathered. Thus, as an extension of the idea of reciprocity, a study's participants, as opposed to "subjects," may even be viewed as co-researchers. Viewing the participants of a study as co-researchers is a socio-political decision. In liberating (e.g., Freire, 1970), democratic (e.g., Dewey, 1916) schools, teachers must be given a participatory voice in the students' educational process.
In an attempt to address this problem of "researcher-centered research," I previously designed and administered a survey that was comprised of a combination of closed-ended and open-ended question items (Lee, 1999). One of the items in the survey stated, "In addition to the questions asked thus far regarding elementary-school-level EFL education in Korea, please write freely about your opinions regarding the above-mentioned topic." (Both the item and the following response to it were written in Korean; I have translated them here into English.) Despite the inclusion of the above item in the survey, one respondent commented, "You have probably learned about the benefits of survey studies, but surveys must be respondent-centered; researcher-centered ones are problematic. I think this survey is researcher-centered [italics added]."

In addition to the above-mentioned problem of survey studies that contain "researcher-centered" items, there is another related shortcoming concerning the existing body of research about KTEs. By the inherent nature of closed-ended survey items, study participants' responses are restricted to the limits imposed upon them by researchers. Of course, researchers must delineate limits to the range of their specific inquiries, but a review of the accumulated research on KTEs strongly suggests that, because of the research field's almost exclusive reliance on closed-ended survey items, the process of collecting much-needed baseline data about KTEs – baseline data that could be studied for creating more refined, systematic closed-ended surveys – has been impeded.

In reference to SLA (second language acquisition), Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) argue that one of the strengths of descriptive observations as a research methodology is in the observations' hypothesis-generating function:

Since there are no a priori hypotheses to be tested, researchers' attention is freed to
discover any potential factors which could significantly influence the SLA process. In fact, such studies are often referred to as hypothesis-generating, since the scope of researchers’ perspectives is not restricted — they can look for patterns in naturally occurring data and, once detected, generate hypothesis which might account for them. (p. 16).

Larsen-Freeman and Long’s claim about SLA research is also very appropriate for research on KTEs.

In short, no study has yet given KTEs in elementary schools an opportunity to truly speak for themselves about basic issues related to EFL education, and this study attempted to provide some of them with just such an opportunity.

**The Research Questions**

This study endeavored to discover the thoughts and beliefs of elementary-school KTEs regarding the following six open-ended questions about the curriculum and teacher development in EFL education in Korean public elementary schools. Questions one through three focus on the curriculum, and questions four through six focus on teacher development.

1. **What have been the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the success be attributed?**

2. **What have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?**
3. What should be done to improve the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools?

4. Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the successful aspects? To what factors can the success be attributed?

5. Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?

6. What should be done to improve the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be viewed on two mutually informing levels: a Korea-specific “micro” level, and an international “macro” level. Of course, many of the Korea-specific issues will have international implications, and vice versa.

At the micro level, there were several areas within the field of EFL in Korea that were informed by this study’s emergent themes. One obvious area was curriculum development. For example, the use of teaching materials and other aspects of syllabus design were areas informed by this study. Another broad area was teacher development. For example, issues related to pre-service and in-service teacher development, teacher recruitment, teacher evaluation, and teacher retention/attrition were informed by the study’s emergent themes. In short, the KTEs themselves suggested many answers to the
basic questions (e.g., who should teach/learn, what should be taught, how should the content be taught, etc.) about EFL education in Korean elementary schools.

At the macro level, the study contributed to discussions relating to global issues in foreign/second language education, especially sociopolitical issues. For instance, the study addresses implications relevant to "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson, 1992), "critical approaches to language planning" (Corson, 1999), and the empowerment of so-called "non-native educators" (Braine, 1999).

**Definition of Terms**

Colleges of education: "Sa-bum-dae-hak." Korean academic institutions that prepare their graduates to be secondary-level school teachers (cf., universities of education).

Dam-im teachers: The "homeroom" teachers. In Korean elementary schools, the dam-im teachers usually teach between eight to ten subject areas (cf., jun-dam teachers).

Elementary-school-level education: Grades one through six in Korea's 6-3-3-4 system of public education. In educational literature, the term "elementary" is often used interchangeably with the term "primary," and both will also be thusly used in this study, unless otherwise noted.

Hagwon: A private academic institute that offers extra-curricular courses in such subjects as English, math, art, and music.

In-service teachers: Teachers who are currently teaching in a school or other formal educational settings.
Jun-dam teachers: Teachers who specialize in teaching one academic subject, for example, music, physical education, or EFL. (cf., dam-im teachers).


Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOE): The Korean governmental body that is responsible for determining policies regarding issues related to public education.

Pre-service teachers: Students who are preparing to become school teachers.

Universities of education: "Gyo-yuk-dae-hak." Korean academic institutions that prepare their graduates to be elementary-school teachers (cf., colleges of education).

Limitations of the Study

This study has three limitations. First, although it may be argued that classroom interaction between teachers and their students is the essence of school-based education, classroom lessons were not observed in this study. This is because the main purpose of this study was to provide a forum for KTEs' individual and collective voices, not to study classroom occurrences, per se. Thus, classroom occurrences are discussed, but only to the extent they relate to the responses of the KTEs who participated in the study.

Second, unless directly pertinent, the review of the relevant literature is limited to Korea-specific issues (as opposed to, for example, issues relating to the ESL or non-Korean EFL contexts). Information related to broader TESOL contexts (such as documents published by ACTFL) is mainly discussed in the "Discussion" chapter of the dissertation, primarily as bases of comparison with Korea-specific issues.
Third, it is unfortunate that the words of the teachers who participated in this study could not be presented here in their original state, i.e., in Korean. Although Korean-to-English translations were member checked (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and no participant objected to the translations, due to the inherent nature of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences, the translated renditions of the KTEs' voices cannot do full justice to the original words. Having said that, I humbly hope that the translations preserved the spirit of the teachers' voices.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

EFL Education in Korea: A Historical Overview

According to Moon (1982), EFL education in Korea can be divided into the following five periods.

The Chosun period. EFL education in Korea can be considered to have begun in the 1880s, at the end of the Chosun dynasty. The schools during this period were reserved for the gentry class, and "English School," a government institution established for the purpose of developing interpreters, translators, diplomats, and administrators, was founded in 1883 (Lee, 1978; Moon, 1976). Around the same period, private schools (the most well-known of them are the Bae-Jae School, founded in 1886; the Ehwa School, in 1886; and the Jung-Shin School, in 1887) were founded primarily by foreign missionaries for the purpose of spreading Christianity throughout Korea.

In schools such as those described above, all courses, EFL and other content courses, were taught by foreigners – mostly missionaries – i.e., "native speakers" of English. The students, who were the sons of families from the gentry class, studied English in a way that was similar to how they studied the various aspects of the Chinese
language (e.g., calligraphy). In other words, rote memorization of English words and phrases was the main method of learning, and English grammar was not taught systematically. It is interesting to note that, even during this early period of EFL education in Korea, many educated, upper-class Koreans believed that English was a means for social success.

The Japanese colonial period. From 1911 until 1945, Korea was a colony of the then Japanese Empire. During this period, other than for hegemonic purposes (such as teaching the Japanese language), the Japanese government largely neglected public education in Korea. In particular, between 1941 and 1945, the period when Japan was engaged in World War II against the Allied Forces, the study of the Japanese language was greatly stressed in Korean education, and the study of English existed in name only.

The English education that did exist during this period had a different purpose than that of the Chosun period. Whereas actual communication was the primary purpose for studying English during the Chosun period, the ostensive purpose for learning English during the Japanese colonial period was to enable the learners to read and understand the classic literature of “Western Civilization.” The main teaching method was comprised of memorizing isolated vocabulary items and grammar rules. As a result, students were able to decode and understand basic sentence-level texts in English, but they were virtually unable to use English for practical communicative purposes. Unfortunately, this tradition of EFL instruction still exists in many Korean classrooms, particularly at the secondary and post-secondary level of education.
The post-liberation period. As a result of the victory by the Allied forces in World War II, Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. Following World War II, within the international context of the Cold War, the political vacuum in Korea was filled by the United States in South Korea and the Soviet Union in North Korea. The United States’ influence on South Korea during this period was tremendous. Almost all aspects of governmental policy and administration in Korea, including educational issues, were copied after those of the United States.

In 1950, approximately five years after being liberated from Japanese rule, Korea became engulfed in the Korean War in which North Korea, with the support of the Soviet Union and China, attacked South Korea in an attempt to unify the peninsula under a communist government. The United States, which led the UN (United Nations) forces in support of South Korea in the war, essentially controlled South Korea during the war, which lasted from 1950 to 1953. The American control over South Korea did not stop after the end of the Korean War, and its influence was far-reaching and deep. In politics, economy, culture, education, technology, communication, transportation, as well as other aspects of society, the American influence in Korea during this period and thereafter could arguably be termed “imperialism,” as used by Phillipson (1992).

After the Korean War, South Korea experienced such extreme poverty that the Korean government had little choice but to prioritize the nation’s immediate economic improvement over the education of its citizens. The “First National Curriculum,” which lasted from 1954 to 1963, emphasized “vocation,” “ethics,” and “anti-communism” as the primary goals of public education (Kim, 1998). EFL education during this period, like all other areas of education, nearly came to a standstill, with no clear vision of the future.
The military government period. Following the Korean War, the Korean government was led by president Seung-Man Rhee, a Princeton graduate who was essentially assigned the position by the United States. With the support of the American government, the Rhee administration was riddled with corruption and, in 1961, after several months of massive public protests against a rigged presidential election, the government was overthrown in a military coup led by General Jung-Hee Park. After the military coup, General Park assumed the position of President, and order returned to Korea. The American government initially opposed the military coup, but once the military regime firmly established itself as the new Korean government and, more importantly, showed its strong anti-communist position, the U.S. changed its stance and supported the military regime.

The Park regime made energetic efforts to improve the nation, and its top national goals were to improve the living standards of Koreans through economic development and to strengthen the national defense. "The Second National Curriculum," which was in effect from 1963 to 1973, emphasized "self-determination" and "self-reliance" (Kim, 1998). During this period, the government also endeavored to improve the education of the citizens, but the government faced two difficult obstacles. One, due to the previous decades of national turmoil, Korea severely lacked educational leaders, from well-informed policy-makers to classroom teachers. Two, Korea was a poor nation that lacked sufficient government resources for social welfare, and the limited resources it had was used mainly to develop its economy and to strengthen the national defense.
During this period, the United States continued to strongly influence Korean education. Through such programs as the Fulbright Scholarship, the East-West Culture Center, and the Peace Corps, the United States greatly influenced the policies regarding the national curriculum in general and EFL education in particular, including the areas of educational content, teaching methodology, and assessment. Overall, however, Korea had so many severe national problems during this period that, rather than further improving education, simply maintaining the status quo was a more realistic national goal.

The educational reform period. Moon (1982) called the period after the early-1980s the “Educational Reform Period” and, given the continuous progress Korea has striven to make in its public education, the term is still appropriate. To date, this period is comprised of three “National Curriculums” (Kim, 1998). “The Fourth National Curriculum” was in effect from 1981 to 1987. This curriculum emphasized the development in the curricular areas of science and technology, and “civil and physical education” (Kim, 1998, p. 3). “The Fifth National Curriculum,” which lasted from 1987 to 1995, focused on “basic skills training, computer education, and efficiency” (Kim, 1998, p. 3). “The Sixth National Curriculum,” began in 1995. It continued to stress computer literacy while calling for more emphasis on “special education” (Kim, 1998, p. 3). Most notably, for the first time in Korean history, the national curriculum emphasized the improvement of foreign language education, especially EFL education. The Sixth National Curriculum, mandated and financed by the national government, led to the start of EFL education in Korean elementary schools.
Current Status of EFL Education in Korean Elementary Schools

As of 1998, there were 5,688 public and private elementary schools in Korea. 3,834,601 students were enrolled in the elementary schools, which were staffed by 139,236 teachers and administrators (see Table 2). In Korea, elementary-level education is comprised of grades 1 through 6. As of the year 2001, EFL is a part of the national curriculum from grades 3 through 6. Also as of the year 2001, there are no plans to add EFL to the curriculum for grades 1 and 2. Table 3 shows a comparative list of when EFL/ESL education begins in the public schools in some other countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Level</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of Teachers and Administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary schools</td>
<td>5,688</td>
<td>3,834,601</td>
<td>139,236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle schools</td>
<td>2,736</td>
<td>2,011,446</td>
<td>93,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High schools</td>
<td>1,921</td>
<td>2,326,716</td>
<td>104,512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-year colleges</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>562,186</td>
<td>11,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year colleges</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>1,051,878</td>
<td>54,128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: National statistics of schools in Korea. (From Book of Registered Schools in Korea, 1998 – 1999. (Editorial Association of Registered Korean Schools, 1998). The statistics for 2-year and 4-year colleges are as of 1997.)

According to the MOE (1994), Korea’s EFL curriculum at the elementary school level should be based on “communicative language teaching.” However, in practice, such a seemingly reasonable and innocuous mandate has been very difficult to implement for numerous reasons, one of which is related to teacher development.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Grade of Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asia</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 1 (one hour daily)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Middle school – grade 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Africa</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>English is the language of instruction from grade 4 of elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>English is the language of instruction from grade 1 of elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>English is the language of instruction from grade 1 of elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>English is the language of instruction from grade 3 of elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>English is the language of instruction from grade 5 of elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Europe</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 5 (English is one of the foreign languages students choose from)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 6 (English is one of the foreign languages students choose from)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 3 (English is one of the foreign languages students choose from)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 4 or 5 (in selected schools only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Elementary school – grade 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: An international comparison of grades in which EFL/ESL is introduced in public schools. (Selectively excerpted from Kim et al., 1993.)
Until 1997, EFL education in Korea began in middle school, i.e., "grade 7."

Historically, the EFL curriculum at the secondary level has been based on the grammar-translation approach. Bae (1997) has noted that this has tremendous implications for EFL education in elementary schools. The current KTEs learned English through the grammar-translation approach, which means, among other things, that most of them have very low proficiency in oral/aural communication skills in English. Furthermore, not only have these teachers learned English through the grammar-translation approach, many of them were trained during their pre-service period to teach English according to the grammar-translation approach. Thus, Bae argues that the influence of the grammar-translation approach in Korean EFL education has resulted in the perpetuation of the approach, even in the face of the government’s mandate to teach otherwise. In sum, the difficulties in implementing a communicative language-teaching approach in elementary schools must be considered in relation to teacher preparation, a topic which will be discussed later in greater detail in the section about Korean teachers of English.

Debate about the Introduction of EFL in Korean Elementary Schools

Regarding EFL education in Korean schools, its supporters argue that English is undeniably the overwhelmingly dominant world language, and that Korea will lose international competitiveness unless her citizens are able to master the de-facto international lingua franca. Indeed, it is difficult to deny the seemingly world-wide influence of English if credence is given to Crystal, who claimed the following in 1987:

English is used as an official or semi-official language in over 60 countries, and has a prominent place in a further 20... Over two-thirds of the world’s scientists write
in English. Three quarters of the world's mail is written in English. Of all the information in the world's electric retrieval systems, 80% is stored in English... Over 50 million children study English as an additional language at primary level; over 80 million study it at secondary level (these figures exclude China). (p. 358)

Others have corroborated to various extents the figures claimed above by Crystal. For instance, Holden (1987) estimated that 45% of scientific information worldwide is written in English. In a striking claim, Kaplan & Ostler (1982) estimated that, as of 1982, approximately 85% of all the information in the world is stored in English.

A number of reasons have been given in support of introducing EFL in Korea at the elementary-school level. One of the most popular arguments in Korea for the early introduction of EFL is based on the "Critical Period Hypothesis," originally proposed for first language acquisition (e.g., Lenneberg, 1967), but which was subsequently also proposed for second language acquisition (e.g., Long, 1990; Patkowskix, 1990; Scovel, 1988). In Korea, advocates of early EFL education who base their position, at least in part, on the critical period hypothesis (e.g., Lee, 1982) have argued that students should be exposed to EFL while they still have access to the "LAD (Language Acquisition Device)," as discussed by Chomsky (e.g., 1965), Slobin (e.g., 1966), McNeil (e.g., 1966), and others.

In addition to the critical period argument, other reasons have been given for introducing EFL at the elementary school level in Korea. Bae (1997) lists eight reasons.

1. To raise people who can actively contribute to the international society.
2. To raise the consciousness of young people about the diversity of various groups of people and cultures.
3. To enable the Korean people to see their own culture in relation to the world.
4. To foster creativity and curiosity in students.
5. To encourage eagerness for study.
6. To improve the students' academic ability in other content areas.
7. To satisfy the needs of individuals, society, and the nation.
8. To provide more learning time, as compared to introducing EFL in middle school. (pp. 24 – 30. Translated by this author.)

On the other hand, other educators in Korea have expressed concerns against introducing EFL in elementary school. Some (e.g., Kub, 1997) doubt the necessity for large-scale EFL education in Korea, arguing that, in reality, only a relatively small proportion of Koreans actually have the opportunity, or the need, to use English for genuine communication.

In addition, it has been argued that even if EFL education at the elementary-school level is deemed to be beneficial, implementing it in elementary schools before many practical problems are solved would likely cause ineffective and inefficient teaching and learning (Lee, 1998). Based on a survey of elementary-school teachers, Min (1993) identified four problem areas related to having EFL education in Korean elementary schools: (1) inadequate teaching texts and materials, (2) poor quality of facilities (e.g., audio/visual aids), (3) shortage of qualified teachers, and (4) inadequate teacher training programs.

Similarly, regarding the practicality of elementary-school-level EFL education in Korea, Hong (1997) identified ten problematic areas: (1) insufficient amount of in-class instruction, (2) lack of coherent curricular transition from elementary school to middle
school and beyond, (3) outdated instructional approaches, (4) inadequate research and
development in the field, (5) shortage of qualified full-time teachers, (6) teachers’
negative attitude regarding TEFL, (7) teacher-centered instruction, (8) uninteresting
instructional content, (9) high student-teacher ratio, and (10) excessive use of Korean
during EFL instruction.

Also, Park (1979) notes that the addition of EFL to the national curriculum of
elementary schools will cause further burdens for students and their parents. Currently,
from grades three through six, the national curriculum is comprised of ten subject areas,
including EFL. Obviously, the students must study this additional subject in school.
However, outside of school, the parents of the students can be financially burdened by the
inclusion of EFL in the national curriculum. In a nation where upward social mobility
depends significantly on one’s educational background, particularly at the university-
level, the competition for entrance to prestigious universities begin early, and, for many
families, the long-term preparation for college begins even before elementary school.
Thus, even for the parents of elementary school-age students, the inclusion of EFL in the
curriculum adds a strong pressure for them to provide their children with extra-curricular
studies in “hagwons,” i.e., private educational institutes. Extra-curricular studies, of
course, cost money.

Lastly, as a parallel to Phillipson’s (1992) concern against “linguistic imperialism,”
some in Korea fear that introducing EFL in elementary school will lead to “cultural
colonialization” (Lee, 1998, pp. 6–7). Many educators have been concerned that the
inclusion of EFL in the national curriculum of elementary schools would lead to a
disproportionate emphasis on English at the expense of de-emphasizing the other subject
areas (e.g., Park, 1979). Most notably, the main concern is that English will overshadow the importance of subject areas that are essential for the maintenance of Korea’s self-identity (Lee, 1982).

Goals for EFL Education in Korean Elementary Schools

In explaining the rationale for promoting the learning of EFL in Korea, the MOE (1995) listed the following three reasons. One, Korea is a participant in international trade, and English is the most commonly used language in international commerce. Two, the Korean government wants to promote the installation of an information infrastructure connecting information centers with homes and schools, and English is the predominant language used in the world’s information infrastructure. Three, the Korean job market demands competent bilingual speakers of Korean and English.

For EFL education in elementary schools, the MOE (1997) has set forth the following general goals: “To foster a basic ability to communicate in English for everyday needs. In addition, to enable the accurate understanding of foreign cultures and thereby further develop our own culture, and to prepare the foundation for introducing the Korean culture to foreign countries” (p. 138). The Ministry went on to outline the goals in greater detail, as follows.

One, to lead learners to be interested in as well as have confidence in using English, and to foster basic communicative ability. Two, to enable learners to communicate naturally in situations relating to everyday life as well as about general topics. Three, to enable learners to understand information from various international sources, and to foster the ability to utilize such information. Four, to better
understand our own culture by understanding foreign cultures, and thereby develop

Learning Standards for EFL in Korean Elementary Schools

The MOE (1997) also outlined, by grade level and by mode of communication (i.e.,
listening, speaking, reading, and writing), learning standards for EFL education in
elementary schools. The standards are listed below. (The standards contain problematic
areas, but the problems will not be discussed here. Instead, they will be analyzed in
chapters four and five, within the context of what the KTEs say about them.)

The third grade. For the third grade, the standards are for listening and speaking
only. In listening, the students should be able to do the following: (1) distinguish stress,
rhythm, and intonation of sounds in English; (2) hear a word and know its meaning –
third-grade students should be able to use between 80 to 120 words; (3) react
appropriately to simple requests or commands; (4) understand simple conversations
[consisting of sentences of seven or less words] about personal life, home, and school; (5)
enjoy short chants and songs; (6) understand easy and simple games and other forms of
play; (7) understand expressions related to practical everyday needs; (8) advanced level –
hear words and understand the relationships among them; (9) advanced level – hear a
sentence and be able to find a picture that matches it.

In speaking, the students in the third grade should be able to do the following: (1)
speak English with appropriate stress, rhythm, and intonation; (2) name things that are
closely connected to their lives – between 80 to 120 words; (3) after seeing an object or a
picture, express in a short sentence what he/she saw; (4) engage in easy and simple conversations [creating sentences consisting of no more than seven words, unless phrases are connected by a conjunction] about personal life, home, and school; (5) follow along in teacher-led chants and songs; (6) participate in easy and simple games and other forms of play; (7) express practical communicative functions such as greetings; (8) advanced level – after seeing objects or pictures, be able to say something about them at the sentence level; (9) advanced level – engage in simple conversations about personal life, home, and school – similar to standard (4), but more advanced in both breadth and depth.

The fourth grade. For the fourth grade, in addition to standards for listening and speaking, those for reading are also introduced. In listening, the students should be able to do the following: (1) understand simple conversations related to everyday life; (2) understand simple explanations about common objects and people [explanations consist of nine or less words; fourth-grade students should be able to use 80 to 120 new words, in addition to the words they learned in third grade]; (3) react appropriately to one-sentence commands or instructions; (4) do easy classroom tasks after hearing a simple explanation; (5) after listening to a simple conversation, understand where and when the conversation occurred; (6) after listening to a simple talk about everyday life, be able to identify the important content words; (7) understand the contents of simple role plays; (8) advanced level – listen to a simple talk and understand the speaker’s intentions or purpose; (9) advanced level – listen to two sentences and be able to distinguish whether the meanings of the sentences were the same or different.
In the area of speaking, fourth-grade students should be able to do the following:
(1) have simple conversations related to everyday life [creating sentences consisting of no more than seven words, unless phrases are connected by a conjunction]; (2) give simple explanations or ask and answer questions about common objects and people; (3) give one-sentence commands or instructions; (4) request help when needed; (5) sing short and simple songs and recite short and simple chants; (6) engage in simple role plays and appropriate language and actions; (7) advanced level – converse with appropriate facial expressions and body language; (8) advanced level – using objects, pictures, or other material, speak briefly about the given material.

In reading, fourth-grade students should be able to do the following: (1) identify all the upper- and lower-case letters of the English alphabet; (2) following the teacher, read short and simple words; (3) with the aid of pictures, objects, and actions, understand the meaning of easy words; (4) have curiosity about the written English found in their environment; (5) become familiar with the placement of letters on a computer keyboard.

The fifth grade. For the fifth grade, in addition to standards for listening, speaking, and reading, those for writing are also introduced. In listening, the students should be able to do the following: (1) understand simple passages related to everyday life and common objects [fifth-grade students should be able to use 90 to 130 new words, in addition to the words they learned in the third and fourth grades]; (2) do classroom tasks after hearing a simple explanation; (3) understand the context in which a simple conversation occurs; (4) understand the main topic of a simple conversation; (5) understand simple passages about past events; (6) understand basic telephone
conversations; (7) advanced level - listen to a simple passage and understand the general context and the speaker's intentions; (8) advanced level - understand the details as well as the overall meaning of a passage that refers to a picture.

In the area of speaking, fifth-grade students should be able to do the following: (1) have short and simple conversations that are appropriate to the contexts and purposes related to everyday life [creating sentences consisting of no more than nine words, unless phrases are connected by a conjunction]; (2) speak briefly about daily life and activities; (3) give commands and instructions that are comprised of two or three connected sentences; (4) after listening to a simple passage, speak about the details of the passage; (5) speak briefly about past events; (6) have basic telephone conversations; (7) advanced level - use common, stock expressions appropriate to the various contexts and purposes of everyday events; (8) advanced level - briefly describe feelings about a memorable past event.

Fifth-grade students should be able to do the following in the area of reading: (1) Comprehend the meaning of simple words; (2) read aloud simple words without the help of the teacher; (3) identify words in print after hearing them; (4) advanced level - understand the relationship between sounds and letters; (5) advanced level - find and type the letters on a computer keyboard.

In writing, fifth-grade students should be able to do the following: (1) identify and write in print form [as opposed to cursive form] all the upper- and lower-case letters of the English alphabet; (2) copy modeled words or independently write words that have been studied orally/aurally; (3) view an object or a picture, then write the matching word;
The sixth grade. For sixth-grade students, the standards for listening, speaking, reading, and writing are as follows. In the area of listening, the students should be able to do the following: (1) understand the purpose of simple passages related to everyday life [sixth-grade students should be able to use 90 to 130 new words, in addition to the words they learned from the third through the fifth grades; in total, by the end of the sixth grade, students should be able to use 450 words, of which up to 30 may be commonly-used words borrowed from foreign languages]; (2) understand the main topic or idea of a simple conversation; (3) understand the details of a simple passage; (4) understand simple passages about future events; (5) understand simple conversations that focus on “why…” and “because…”; (6) understand simple passages about comparisons; (7) understand simple telephone conversations; (8) advanced level – after listening to a simple passage, understand the sequence in which events occurred; (9) advanced level – listen to a simple passage and judge whether some part of its content is true or false.

In speaking, sixth-grade students should be able to do the following: (1) listen to a simple passage about everyday life, then ask and answer questions about the passage [creating sentences consisting of no more than nine words, unless phrases are connected by a conjunction]; (2) speak briefly one’s opinion about everyday topics; (3) listen to a simple conversation, then talk about its main topic; (4) listen to a simple passage, then talk about its details; (5) ask and answer simple questions about past and future events; (6) have simple conversations that focus on “why…” and “because…”; (7) have simple
telephone conversations; (8) advanced level - after seeing a series of pictures or cartoon strips, talk sequentially about the events that occur in them.

Sixth-grade students should be able to do the following in the area of reading: (1) Comprehend the meaning of simple words and phrases; (2) read words and phrases previously learned orally/aurally; (3) read sentences aloud, with appropriate pauses; (4) understand short and simple passages about everyday life; (5) advanced level – read a short passage about everyday life and judge whether some part of its content is true or false.

In the area of writing, sixth-grade students should be able to do the following: (1) write simple and easy words; (2) write phrases or sentences previously studied orally/aurally; (3) know the rules for capitalization, and write punctuation marks; (4) advanced level – with the aid of a model, describe an object or a picture in one sentence; (5) advanced level – write simple birthday cards and thank you cards.

**TESOL's Learning Standards for Pre-K through 12 Grades**

It may be illuminating to compare the MOE’s goals and learning standards for elementary school-level EFL education with the goals and standards for ESL education. For example, in the U.S.A., the TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) organization outlined the following ESL “goals” and “standards” for grades Pre-K through 12 (see Table 4).
Goal 1
Standard 1: To use English to communicate in social settings: Students will use English to participate in social interactions.
Standard 2: To use English to communicate in social settings: Students will interact in, through, and with spoken and written English for personal expression and enjoyment.
Standard 3: To use English to communicate in social settings: Students will use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence.

Goal 2
Standard 1: To use English to achieve academically in all content areas: Students will use English to interact in the classroom.
Standard 2: To use English to achieve academically in all content areas: Students will use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form.
Standard 3: To use English to achieve academically in all content areas: Students will use appropriate learning strategies to construct and apply academic knowledge.

Goal 3
Standard 1: To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways: Students will use the appropriate language variety, register, and genre according to audience, purpose, and setting.
Standard 2: To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways: Students will use nonverbal communication appropriate to audience, purpose, and setting.
Standard 3: To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways: Students will use appropriate learning strategies to extend their communicative competence.

Table 4: TESOL's ESL standards for Pre-K through 12 students. (From ESL Standards for Pre-K – 12 Students, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc., 1997).
The goals and standards for grades Pre-K through 12 are identical, but TESOL sets different “Sample Progress Indicators” for grades Pre-K through 3, grades 4 through 8, and grades 9 through 12. The indicators of progress for the three levels are different in that the indicators for the higher grades subsume those of the lower grades and add other indicators to the subsumed list.

The Curriculum

The general curriculum. The general curriculum in Korean elementary schools is, for all intents and purposes, standardized by the MOE. Figure 1 shows a typical example of an actual third-grade class’s weekly schedule planned according to the Sixth National Curriculum. One study period lasts forty minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>MON</th>
<th>TUE</th>
<th>WED</th>
<th>THU</th>
<th>FRI</th>
<th>SAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening/</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening/</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Natural Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOURTH</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Natural Science</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Extra-curricular Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIFTH</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Home and Family</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIXTH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: A typical curricular schedule for a third-grade class in a Korean elementary school. (From Hyo-Myung Elementary School (a pseudonym), located in a large metropolitan city in southern Korea, for the academic year 2000 – 2001.)
The EFL curriculum. From 1997 (the year EFL became a regular subject in the elementary-school curriculum in Korea) through 2000, EFL in Korean elementary schools was studied two times per week, in two, 40-minute periods. However, according to the Seventh National Curriculum, from the academic year 2001, the number of class sessions per week for the third and fourth grades was reduced from two to one, while the number of sessions for the fifth and sixth grades remains at two per week. (The Seventh National Curriculum is in effect from 2000 through 2004, but its implementation has been planned for five, year-by-year stages: In 2000, the curriculum goes into effect in grades one and two of primary school; in 2001, grades three and four of primary school and grade one of middle school; in 2002, grades five and six of primary school, grade two of middle school, and grade one of high school; in 2003, grade three of middle school and grade two of high school; in 2004, grade three of high school. This multi-stage implementation is the reason that, although the overall curriculum went into effect in 2000, it does not affect the EFL curriculum until its second stage in 2001, because EFL is not taught in grades one and two of primary school. In addition, the academic year in Korea begins in March, so the curriculum is actually in effect from March of 2000 through February of 2005.)

The class work centers around the main textbook, which is comprised of 16 chapters, and each chapter is organized around one or two communicative functions (See Table 5 for an example of a typical textbook's contents). The focus of language learning is listening/speaking, as opposed to reading/writing. With the exception of the titles of the
chapters and the sub-chapters, which are written in English, the content of the textbooks is comprised almost entirely of Korean text and accompanying pictures. Also, the higher the grade level, the greater the amount of English in the textbooks.

The class work using the main textbook is usually comprised of first watching a videotape or listening to an audiotape of brief, function-based, conversational exchanges (e.g., short greetings) between English speakers. After that, through a number of short listening exercises such as pointing to appropriate pictures, the teacher augments the students' ability to comprehend the targeted communicative function. When the teacher is sure that the students have understood the conversations, the students do chanting exercises, repeating model conversations that are the same as or similar to the previously studied conversations. In addition to these basic activities, much of the class work also includes singing songs, playing games, and engaging in simulated situational conversations.

**EFL teaching materials.** The teaching materials for EFL classes in Korean elementary schools can range from traditional materials such as textbooks and flash cards to state-of-the-art CD-ROMs and other computer-assisted language learning devices. The most commonly used materials, however, are textbooks, audiotapes, and videotapes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter and Title</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Examples of English Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hello</td>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>Hello. Hi. I’m In-Ho.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What’s This?</td>
<td>Asking about objects</td>
<td>What is this? This is a book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Very Good!</td>
<td>Counting numbers; Praising</td>
<td>One, two, … ten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Stand Up, Please</td>
<td>Following directions</td>
<td>Very good, In-Ho.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Thanks</td>
<td>Finding objects; Thanking</td>
<td>Is this your hat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Oh, Sorry!</td>
<td>Talking about others; Apologizing</td>
<td>Are you OK?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Excuse Me</td>
<td>Talking about others; Beg. conversations</td>
<td>Excuse me, but …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Come This Way</td>
<td>Giving directions; Praising</td>
<td>Come in. Follow me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is This Your Father?</td>
<td>Asking about family; Agreeing</td>
<td>Who is this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Two Hamburgers, Please</td>
<td>Talking about food; Order. food</td>
<td>I like ice cream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One hot dog, please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Oh, a Nice Shirt!</td>
<td>Giving gifts; Expressing feelings</td>
<td>What a pretty dress!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Let’s Play Soccer</td>
<td>Asking about favorites; Suggesting</td>
<td>Do you like to play soccer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Look at the Cow</td>
<td>Describing animals</td>
<td>The cat is cute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I’m Hungry</td>
<td>Describing feelings about the body; Offering solutions</td>
<td>I’m sick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. It’s Sunny</td>
<td>Talking about the weather; Repeating questions</td>
<td>It’s cold today.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: The contents of a typical EFL textbook used in Korean public elementary schools. (From Elementary School English: Grade 3, Sisa English Publishing, 1997).
The textbooks for middle schools and high schools, like those for elementary schools, are now ostensibly “speaking-/listening-centered,” but S. H. Kim (2000) reports on middle-school teachers who are dissatisfied with the current EFL books they must use. One teacher stated, “The [middle-school EFL] textbook has supposedly become speaking- and listening-centered, but there have only been minor changes – in the dialogue passages. The practice questions related to listening and speaking simply show model phrases, and the education does not go beyond requiring students to memorize phrases as if they were parrots” [translated into English by this author]. Because the process for creating EFL textbooks for middle schools is the same as that for high schools and elementary schools, there is a high possibility that many KTEs in elementary schools are also dissatisfied with their textbooks.

In addition to the main textbook, audio-visual materials are also much used for EFL education in Korean elementary schools. According to Kim (1998),

The emphasis on oral proficiency has meant that audio-visual equipment was purchased for every classroom to provide authentic pronunciation. For most elementary school classrooms this has meant a new overhead projector, an opaque projector, 43-inch wide television screen or multi-vision monitor, a video [player], and an audio set. Audiotapes contain authentic recordings by native English speakers using the textbook dialogues, songs, and chants. They are distributed to students along with textbooks . . . Videotapes for teachers and their students show ideal situations of how to conduct given activities and how to sing along to songs with gestures in the text. Videotapes usually contain the key content of each class
Kim’s above claims, that most elementary-school classrooms readily have at their disposal a range of technological equipment, should be accepted with caution. While such resources may be available in the classrooms of well-financed urban school districts, such is not the case for all the classrooms throughout Korea, particularly in the rural regions of Korea.

**Assessment and EFL education.** According to the MOE’s guidelines for the “Seventh National Curriculum” (1997), “evaluation” has a broader meaning than “assessment.” (For differing definitions of “evaluation” and “assessment,” see Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Hancock, 1994; Nunan, 1988a; Shaw & Dowsett, 1986.) The guidelines state that “assessment” is simply a measurement of ability or capacity, but “evaluation” includes the analyses of the measurements, including a consideration of the practical implications for improving the curriculum.

Regarding the “evaluation” of student’s EFL learning in elementary schools, the MOE (1997) outlines the following five points. One, evaluation in elementary school should not focus on outcomes. Rather, it should serve as a stimulus for creating a setting in which students can concentrate on their studies. Two, evaluations may be conducted, but in ways that do not place psychological stress on the students, and in ways other than by quantitative measurements. Three, through games, role play, and other communication-based activities, students should be evaluated regarding their communicative proficiency, attitude towards learning EFL, and motivation to participate...
in learning. The evaluation of each student should be described in words, as opposed to quantitative descriptions such as numerical rankings, etc. Four, teaching of EFL should be oral-/aural-based, and the students' ability to use the spoken language in class should be observed by the teacher, and the evaluations should be based on the observations. Lastly, when advanced and/or remedial classes are created in addition to the regular classes, the former types of classes should be organized in accordance with the form of "open education." (The MOE, however, does not explicitly describe what is meant by "open education.")

Korean Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

One of the key factors in any educational endeavor is the teacher. This section examines the teachers of EFL in Korean elementary schools. In Korean elementary schools, the teachers of EFL are either "dam-im" (homeroom) teachers or "jun-dam" (full-time specialist) teachers. The Korean teachers of EFL (KTEs) in elementary schools, unlike their colleagues who teach in middle or high schools, do not need to obtain a "teacher’s certificate for English education." According to Bae (1997), this difference is due to the fact that, currently, in Korean elementary schools, EFL, as well as all other courses in the general curriculum, may be taught by dam-im teachers. (In middle school and high school, all courses in the general curriculum, including EFL, are taught by jun-dam teachers.)

The professional backgrounds of KTEs can vary greatly, between dam-im teachers and jun-dam teachers, but also among dam-im teachers and among jun-dam teachers. Most dam-im teachers are graduates of a "gyo-yuk dae-hak" (university of education),
which produces teachers for the elementary schools in Korea. (In Korea, by law, graduates of a university of education teach in elementary schools, while graduates of a “sa-bum dae-hak” (college of education), which is usually a part of a larger multi-college university, go on to teach in middle and high schools. Crossovers are rare.) Until 1997, in universities of education, the curriculum for the elementary-school teachers-to-be consisted of only two required courses in general English. The two courses were often the only English-related courses that most of the pre-service teachers studied in college. Not surprisingly, many of these teachers who later became teachers of EFL, particularly the relatively older teachers, feel that they are grossly inadequate as teachers of English (Lee, 1999).

In an effort to prepare in-service dam-im teachers in elementary schools to begin teaching EFL, the MOE organized intensive training programs that are held during the summer and winter breaks. The programs have two levels, basic and advanced. A program is in session for four weeks (Monday through Saturday), and the total amount of contact hours per session is approximately 120. Approximately two-thirds of the program’s time is devoted to the improvement of the teachers’ general proficiency in English communication. The other one-third of the time focuses on TESOL-related teaching methodology and theory.

The jun-dam teachers of EFL may formerly have been dam-im teachers or people who have no previous experience as elementary-school teachers but who simply are proficient in English. To illustrate, two typical cases of jun-dam teachers are given. One typical case is a former dam-im teacher who, for various personal reasons or circumstances at her school, either volunteered or was designated by her school’s
principal to be a jun-dam teacher of EFL. Another typical case is a university graduate with a bachelor's degree in either English Language and Literature or English Education, neither of which qualifies her to be a dam-im teacher in elementary school. However, the person may have a teaching certificate, and, because of her academic background in English, may have been recruited by the MOE or a private personnel agency, or she may have endeavored on her own initiative to become a jun-dam teacher.

Despite a shortage of qualified EFL teachers in Korean elementary schools, as stated above, it is rare to see teachers who are trained for secondary education teaching in elementary schools. In the past, attempts by the MOE to fill regular (as opposed to part-time or short-term) teaching positions in elementary schools with applicants who are not graduates of a university of education have met strong resistance from the students and faculty members of universities of education. For example, in October, 1999, approximately 7,000 students from universities of education nation-wide gathered in Seoul, the capital of Korea, to demand that the MOE withdraw a proposal that would allow those with a secondary-school teaching certificate to be employed as regular teachers in elementary schools (Kang, S. J., 1999). The demonstrators argued that teachers without specific training in elementary-school education will not be able to adequately meet the needs of elementary-school-age children. They further stated that permitting those without specific training in elementary-school education to teach in elementary schools ignores the professionalism involved in teaching elementary-school students, and that the Ministry's proposed plans are tantamount to an attempt to destroy the reason for the existence of universities of education in Korea.

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Although the above-mentioned protest was not targeted specifically towards EFL teachers, a similar viewpoint has also been expressed about EFL teachers by those associated with universities of education. For example, W. G. Lee, in his book, *Theory of Primary-School English Education* (1998), states that, because “... understanding and aiding the maturational progress of students is the core role of an elementary-school teacher, this role is what differentiates the professionalism between teachers at the primary-school level and those at the secondary-school level” (p. 81; translated from Korean to English by this author). In essence, he argues that, for EFL education at the elementary-school-level, a teacher with a general academic background (i.e., little or no training in EFL education) in elementary-school education is more suitable than one who majored specifically in English Education but who has little or no training in elementary-school education. (It is worth mentioning that, at the time he wrote his book, Lee was a faculty member in the Department of English Education at Seoul National University of Education, an institution that prepares teachers for elementary schools.)

To compare the relative merits of dam-im versus jun-dam teachers of English, Park (1998) surveyed KTEs. Park found that KTEs identified ten potential problems associated with having dam-im teachers as instructors of EFL:

1. Difficulty in procuring a sufficient number of qualified teachers.
2. Insufficient time for the teachers to prepare lessons (since dam-im teachers must teach nine other subjects in addition to English).
3. The study of other academic subjects may be neglected.
4. The school parents’ lack of confidence in the English teachers.
5. Possibility that inaccurate pronunciation may be taught.
6. Inadequacy in the teachers' English proficiency.
7. Teachers' lack of confidence about teaching the subject.
8. A competitive comparison among teachers.
10. A wide variation in teaching ability among the teachers.

On the other hand, KTEs also identified ten potential problems with having jun-dam teachers as instructors of EFL (Park, 1998):

1. Difficulty in providing individualized feedback for the students, due to a lack of sufficient contact time between a teacher and her/his students.
2. Difficulty in developing personal closeness between a teacher and her/his students.
3. Insufficient coordination between the study of English and that of the other subject areas.
4. A teacher's difficulty in making detailed evaluations about her/his students.
5. Potential conflict between jun-dam teachers and dam-im teachers who may have a negative opinion about EFL education in elementary schools.
6. Difficulty in sustaining student interest in English, due to insufficient study time.
7. Difficulty in obtaining assistance from the students' parents.
8. Difficulty in forming professional organizations and conducting group research.
9. Jun-dam teachers are locked into the jun-dam position; they cannot become dam-im teachers.
10. The administrative process is complex when a jun-dam teacher changes schools.

(Park does not elaborate why points 6, 7, 8, and 10 in the above list would be problems unique to jun-dam teachers, nor why point 9 is necessarily a problem. It should also be
noted that, at the time he wrote his paper, Park was a faculty member at the Inchon University of Education, an institution that prepares dam-im teachers for elementary schools.)

In summary, since 1997, EFL has been one of the core courses for students in grades 3 through 6 in Korean public elementary schools. However, even from the earliest discussions about adding EFL education to the regular curriculum of public elementary schools in Korea, many educational leaders (e.g., Kim, 1992; Park, 1979; Park et al., 1991) have voiced their concerns about a critical problem: a shortage of qualified teachers. Thus, a generally accepted opinion about EFL education in Korean elementary schools is that, in order to successfully develop and maintain EFL education, it is vitally necessary to develop a sufficient number of qualified teachers.

**Development of KTEs**

In recent years, the development of KTEs has been in the process of undergoing significant changes. The trend in EFL education in Korea has been moving away from grammar-based instruction to one that focuses on oral/aural communicative competence. As a result, educational programs that develop KTEs have also shifted their curricular focus towards one that emphasizes the development of KTEs who are capable of using English for real communicative purposes. The following sections discuss the development of KTEs according to three categories: pre-service programs, in-service programs, and programs for foreign (non-Korean) KTEs.
Teacher development: pre-service. In 1946, soon after being liberated from Japanese colonial rule following the end of World War II in 1945, the first college of education in Korea was founded at Seoul National University. In 1951, the first private college of education was founded at Ehwa Women's University. Korea's educational system for preparing teachers for public schools has undergone many changes since those days, and, at present, there are three main educational tracks for the development of teachers: (1) 4-year “universities of education,” which prepare primary-school teachers; (2) 4-year “colleges of education,” which prepare secondary-school teachers; and (3) regular colleges with certificate programs for those who wish to be secondary-school teachers (Kwon, 1997).

Currently in Korea, there are 13 academic institutions that prepare teachers for elementary schools. (These institutions are sometimes called “education colleges,” “teachers colleges,” or “universities of education.” For the sake of consistency, and to avoid confusion with “colleges of education,” academic institutions that prepare elementary-school teachers will henceforth be called universities of education.) The universities of education are located throughout Korea, and each university produces most of the teachers for the elementary schools in its vicinity.

In 1996, to better prepare EFL teachers for elementary schools, the MOE issued guidelines for the universities of education nation-wide. The guidelines included the following directives regarding changes in the curriculum for pre-service teacher training: for the subject of general English, double the required (for graduation) amount of credit hours from 6 to 12 or more; change the focus of learning English from grammar-centered study to oral/aural English; increase the number of students in the advanced English
training program; improve the general curriculum of the EFL program; develop methods and techniques for teaching elementary-school-level EFL; employ professors who are specialists in TEFL to train teachers; support in-service programs for EFL teachers in elementary schools (Kwon, 1997; MOE, 1996).

**Teacher development: in-service.** EFL education in Korean elementary schools was implemented with the plan that almost all of the teaching would be done by the dam-im (homeroom) teachers. This meant that massive numbers of dam-im teachers had to receive in-service training for teaching EFL. The MOE designed a series of two (basic and advanced) 120-hour in-service programs to train dam-im teachers. Of the 120 hours, approximately 80 hours were devoted to developing the teachers' basic communicative competence in English, and roughly 40 hours were reserved for studying subjects related to EFL pedagogy.

Since 1996, the Korean government has implemented the in-service training programs throughout Korea. In addition, the MOE has also offered study-abroad training programs. To illustrate the scale of the in-service training project, in 1996, approximately 25,000 elementary-school teachers received the 120-hour in-service training (18,000 in the basic program and 6,600 in the advanced program). Stated differently, in one year, approximately 18% of all teachers/administrators working in Korean elementary schools received in-service training for EFL education. Also, about 700 teachers received a 4-week TEFL training course abroad (Kwon, 1997).

For the future, beginning in year 2001, the MOE plans to annually provide intensive English training to 15,000 elementary-school teachers (about 11% of all
elementary school teachers/administrators nation-wide). For TEFL-related research, the
Korean government plans to grant to various research groups a total of 1.5 billion won
(roughly 1.4 million U.S. dollars) in 2001. Also, proficiency in English will become a
key factor in hirings, promotions, and other personnel decisions regarding school teachers
(Kang, 2000).

Teacher development: foreign teachers. Most of the foreign teachers of EFL in
Korean public schools have been recruited through the EPIK. The EPIK (English
Program in Korea), a program similar to the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching)
program, began in Korea in 1995, primarily to recruit teachers for secondary schools.
Ahn et al. (1998) state that the purpose of the EPIK is “to improve the English-speaking
ability of Korean students, to develop cultural exchanges, and to reform English teaching
methodology in preparation for the globalization of Korea” (p. 242).

In 1997, the number of EPIK teachers totaled 856 (Ahn et al., 1998). Since then,
due primarily to the severe economic depression in Korea, which in turn decreased the
allocation of funds for the hiring of foreign teachers, the number of foreign teachers has
decreased dramatically. As of April 2000, there were 188 foreign teachers of EFL in
Korean public schools, mostly in secondary schools (Kim, J. S., 2000). However, with
the recent improvement of the Korean economy, the Korean government has decided to
channel more funds into the hiring of foreign teachers of EFL, for primary as well as
secondary schools. The MOE plans to expand the number of foreign teachers to 402 by
the year 2001 (Kim, J. S., 2000).
The inclusion of foreign EFL teachers in Korean public schools, however, has been problematic. In a study by Ahn et al. (1998), it was found that the source of problems related to the foreign teachers in the EPIK could be attributed to both the foreign teachers and the environment in which they work and live. One of the biggest problems that Ahn et al. found was that, in general, the foreign teachers were inexperienced and/or under-qualified as teachers. They found that 67% of the EPIK teachers in 1997 were in their twenties and another 20% were in their thirties; only 13% of the teachers were older than forty. Further, only 26% of the teachers had a teacher’s certificate, and only 29% of the teachers had more than one year of formal teaching experience. Ahn et al. also found that the foreign teachers do not receive adequate preliminary nor in-service training while teaching in the Korean elementary schools.

Professional Attributes of Teachers in TESOL.

This section discusses issues related to the professional attributes of teachers in three increasing levels of specificity: (1) research on effective teachers in general education; (2) the attributes of teachers of TESOL; and (3) the attributes of Korean teachers of EFL.

Research on attributes of effective teaching/teachers. The so-called “process-product studies” on effective teaching, which examine whether or not specific teacher behaviors are associated with students’ academic outcomes, began in the 1960s. Cruickshank (1990) organizes the research findings into four types: personal
characteristic of teachers, teachers' instructional styles and methods, teacher-student relationships, and overall classroom management.

Blum (1984) states that the classrooms of effective teachers typically had the following twelve characteristics: (1) Instruction is guided by a preplanned curriculum; (2) Teachers have high expectations for student learning; (3) Students are carefully oriented to lessons; (4) Instruction is clear and focused; (5) Learner progress is monitored closely; (6) When students do not understand, they are re-taught; (7) Class time is used for learning; (8) There are smooth, efficient classroom routines; (9) Instructional groups formed in the classroom fit instructional needs; (10) Standards for classroom behavior are high; (11) Personal interaction between teachers and students are positive; and (12) Incentives and rewards for students are used to promote excellence.

In a meta-analysis of research on effective teaching conducted between the mid-1970s to the late-1980s, Porter and Brophy (1988) arrived at the following eight conclusions about effective teachers: (1) They are clear planners of classroom goals; (2) They are knowledgeable about the subject matter they teach; (3) They accept responsibility for their students' academic achievement; (4) They are clear communicators; (5) They model good learning; (6) They are able to anticipate students' problems and correct them before they arise; (7) They use instructional materials thoughtfully and flexibly; and (8) They are reflective about their teaching practice.

The studies on effective teaching, however, have been criticized, primarily because of weaknesses in their methodological designs. For example, Cruickshank (1990) points out that neither teachers nor students were randomly sampled in the studies reviewed. In addition, it has been pointed out (e.g., Nunan and Lamb, 1996) that in studies on effective
teaching, "... [teacher] effectiveness is defined in terms of the ability of the students to
achieve high grades on standardized tests. Such tests are not always the most reliable
indicator of high-quality education" (p. 117). This point seems especially important to
remember for communicative language teaching. Further, Nunan and Lamb state, "... we
do not believe that one can simply put together a list of behaviors and assume that these
will aggregate to good practice" (p. 117). In addition, some (e.g., Richards and Nunan,
1990; Nunan and Lamb, 1996) have also cautioned that lists such as the ones shown
above are guidelines only, as opposed to strict rules that govern all teaching environments.
Nevertheless, as Laut (1995) argues, research on effective teaching has produced a
knowledge base of potentially effective teaching practices, which will in turn aid future
research in the area of teacher development.

Regarding teachers' knowledge of subject-matter content, after a review of studies
about it in general education, Lafayette (1993) states that, "In general, the relationship
between teacher knowledge of subject matter and student achievement has not been
firmly established" (p. 126). However, Lafayette also claims, "If teachers understand
what they know, their subject-matter preparation will have a strong influence on the way
they conceptualize, select, organize, and deliver what they teach" (p. 126).

There is also much in general education literature about the importance of reflective
teaching (e.g., Cruickshank and Applegate, 1981; Gore, 1987; Zeichner, 1983).
Reflective teaching may be viewed on two levels: a narrow, more technical level, and a
broader, more philosophical level. To illustrate, Cruickshank and Applegate (1981) states
that the main purpose of reflectivity in teaching is to develop well-reasoned teaching
practice. He limits reflectivity to the events within the classroom. In contrast, Zeichner
(1983) argues that reflective teaching should analyze teaching and learning within a socio-political setting. In this view, reflectivity is a critical act involving ideology, in the sense espoused by, for example, Apple (1990) and Freire (1972).

Teachers in TESOL. Influenced by the process-product studies in general education, some in the field of foreign/second language education have attempted to empirically systematize teaching in terms of observable skills (e.g., Long, 1980). However, a critical problem with such a "micro" perspective about teaching is that effective teaching cannot be explained only in terms of observable behavior (e.g., Richards, 1990).

On the other hand, others in the field have viewed teaching in a more holistic way (e.g., Britten, 1985). Under this view, teaching is much more than having a mechanical command of a set of skills; thus, teaching may be distinguished from a craft; teaching involves continuous self-development through the discovery of new understandings. Therefore, it is critically important that language teachers be reflective about their work (e.g., Bartlett, 1990; Joiner, 1993; Richards & Lockhart, 1996).

Still others have attempted to find a middle ground between the "micro" and the "macro" perspectives (e.g., Pennington, 1990; Richards, 1990). Pennington (1990) outlines the following list of eight prerequisites for the continuing professional development of language teachers:

1. Knowledge of the theoretical base of the field in language learning and classroom research.

2. Informed knowledge of self and students.

3. Attitudes of flexibility and openness to change.
4. Decision-making and communication skills.

5. The analytical skills necessary for assessing different teaching situations and the changing conditions in a classroom.

6. Awareness of alternative teaching approaches and the ability to put these into practice.

7. The confidence and the skills to alter one's teaching approach as needed.

8. Practical experience with different teaching approaches. (p. 150).

The next several paragraphs present some notable attributes for teachers in the field of TESOL. The lists contain elements of both the "micro" and the "macro" perspectives on effective teaching.

Schrier (1993) lists four prerequisites for the professionalization of foreign language teachers:

1. Proficiency in the foreign language to be taught and its culture.

2. Proficiency in the language and the culture of the school's community.

3. Expertise in curricular design and implementation.

4. Technological sophistication.

Horwitz (1996) states that teachers of a foreign language should have the following attributes: "Good humor, creativity, understanding of young people, love of the language and culture, high language proficiency, a solid background in methodology, and a flexible teaching style" (p. 370).

Thonis (as cited in Ramirez, 1995) lists eight things that languages teachers must be able to do:

1. Identify students' language abilities and needs.

2. Organize appropriate level of instruction.
3. Maintain an orderly, businesslike classroom.

4. Provide for a range of language abilities and learning differences.

5. Manage several groups within a single classroom.

6. Create interest and enthusiasm for learning.

7. Present appropriate lessons and guide practice.

8. Monitor student progress.

Thonis further states that language teachers should be knowledgeable in at least the following ten areas: (1) linguistic principles, (2) theories of language acquisition, (3) first and second language differences, (4) available materials and their advantages and disadvantages, (5) teaching methods, (6) assessment and testing techniques, (7) rationale for studying foreign languages, (8) curriculum design, (9) instructional planning, and (10) second or foreign language profession.

Finally, Chastain (1988) argues that all teachers, regardless of level of expertise, must keep up with the current developments in the field. Pennington (1990) states that “A distinguishing characteristic of the notion of teaching as a profession is the centrality of career growth as an ongoing goal” (p. 132).

Korean teachers of EFL. The implementation of foreign language programs in schools must include plans for teacher development. There is general agreement among Korean academicians (Bae, 1995; Kim, 1993; Lee, 1998; Park et al. 1991) that the following three fundamental requirements must be met in order to be a qualified elementary-school KTE:

1. **Possess the ability to proficiently use English.**
2. Possess knowledge about the English language.

3. Possess knowledge about English education.

In addition, it has been argued that KTEs for elementary schools require different attributes than those required by KTEs for middle and high schools (Bae, 1997; Lee, 1998). For instance, Lee (1998) states that, because students of elementary-school age are at a very impressionable stage of emotional development, KTEs in elementary schools, compared to KTEs in middle or high schools, should have better nurturing skills. Nurturing skills, according to Lee, includes being knowledgeable about the mental and emotional needs of children and being able to assist in their overall maturational development (p. 81).

One of the fundamental problems regarding the development of qualified KTEs for elementary schools, however, is that, to date, the MOE has no clear standards for what “qualified” means (Bae, 1997; Lee, 1998). Based on a meta-analysis of surveys of elementary-school KTEs, Bae (1997) suggests the following minimum and advanced standards for the above-mentioned three basic attributes necessary for qualified KTEs (i.e., having the ability to proficiently use English, possessing knowledge about the English language, and possessing knowledge about English education).

First, Bae (1997) specifies the minimum and advanced standards for English proficiency by four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

1. **Listening**—**minimum**: From the listening materials available at the teacher’s elementary school, or from the live speech of adult speakers, comprehend simple conversations about everyday topics. **Listening**—**advanced**: Comprehend the normal speech of adult speakers.
2. Speaking – minimum: Using notes, conduct lessons without committing too many English-related errors; converse about everyday topics with English-speaking colleagues. Speaking – advanced: Conduct lessons in English without difficulty; while conducting lessons, speak fluently without frequent reference to notes; explain about everyday topics in ways that would be easily understood by native speakers.

3. Reading – minimum: Understand simply written material about familiar topics; easily understand the written material found in middle-school English textbooks. Reading – advanced: Easily understand articles about general topics found in newspapers and magazines.

4. Writing – minimum: Suggest correct examples during class; write lesson plans; write short, simple letters. Writing – advanced: With some errors, write letters, reports, summaries, etc.

Second, Bae (1997) outlines the minimum and advanced standards concerning knowledge about the English language according to two sub-areas: knowledge about English linguistics and knowledge about English literature.

1. Linguistic knowledge – minimum: Possess some knowledge about phonology, grammar, and cross-linguistic differences between Korean and English. Linguistic knowledge – advanced: Possess basic knowledge about the developmental history of the English language, phonological rules, communicative grammar, semantics, etc.

2. Literary knowledge – minimum: Possess basic knowledge about children’s literature; relating to [English-related] culture, possess basic knowledge about geography, history, literature, arts, and customs. Literary knowledge – advanced: Possess some
knowledge about children's literature, including poetry and other forms of prose; know foreign cultures well enough to make cross-cultural comparisons.

Third, Bae (1997) outlines the minimum and advanced standards for knowledge about English education (TESOL) according to two sub-areas: academic knowledge and pedagogical knowledge.

1. Academic knowledge – minimum: Possess some knowledge about communicative competence, pronunciation, grammar, and cross-linguistic differences between Korean and English; have some theoretical and practical knowledge about [language-related] educational psychology and language development related to elementary-school-age children. Academic knowledge – advanced: Be able to apply to classroom lessons knowledge about communicative competence, language acquisition/learning processes, error analysis and discourse analysis, and cross-cultural differences.

2. Pedagogical knowledge – minimum: Possess some knowledge about effective teaching methods for developing the communicative competence of students of various levels of proficiency; have some knowledge about the classroom uses of songs, games, materials from the school's language lab, etc. Pedagogical knowledge – advanced: Possess sufficient knowledge about teaching methods and skills, and be able to apply the knowledge to teaching situations.

Conclusion

EFL education in Korea has, in its one-hundred-year history, overcome some very difficult times, to the credit of many educational leaders. The recently introduced EFL education program in Korean elementary schools has met with both successes and
shortcomings. Regarding the shortcomings, two of the most critical issues concern the curriculum and teacher development. The next chapter describes the methodology for studying the two issues from the perspective of practicing KTEs.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was guided by six fundamental questions that arose as a result of my own teaching experiences as an EFL teacher in Korea. I have learned that, in matters related to educational policy making in Korea, the classroom teachers have very little input. Thus, the main purpose of the study was to allow elementary-school KTEs to voice their thoughts about EFL education in Korean public elementary schools, with the hope that their voices will be heard and taken into account in future EFL-related educational policies.

The six basic research questions are as follows:
1. What have been the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the success be attributed?
2. What have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?
3. What should be done to improve the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools?
4. Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the successful aspects? To what factors can the success be attributed?

5. Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?

6. What should be done to improve the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools?

The methodology of the study consisted of four complementary parts: a "standardized open-ended survey" (SOS), in-person interviews, interviews via email correspondence, and a document search. The survey questions were open-ended to allow the respondents maximum freedom in their range of responses. Following the survey part of the study, some of the KTEs who agreed to do so were interviewed in person or, at their preference, interviewed through email correspondence. In addition, documents (e.g., intra-school reports) pertinent to the study were also collected and studied. Unless otherwise noted, the contents of the collected data were in Korean; the contents were translated as necessary into English for publication purposes.

Subjects

The participants of this study were in-service KTEs who taught at elementary schools in and around a large metropolitan city in southern Korea. The KTEs were surveyed while participating in an in-service training program held at a local university. The SOS was administered to 100 teachers, and 54 returned the surveys. Noteworthy
demographic information about the respondents of the SOS is as follows. Of the 54 respondents, 51 were female and 3 were male. The age of the participants ranged from 23 to 50; 25 of the teachers were in their twenties, 17 were in their thirties, 10 were in their forties, and one was 50 years old (and one person did not give his age). Their major areas of undergraduate study were diverse, ranging from English education to forestry. Their EFL teaching experience ranged from none to six and one-half years; 36 of the teachers had one year or less of experience, 11 had between one and one-half to two years of experience, 1 had three years of experience, and 6 had more than three years of experience (the latter six participants had also taught at the secondary level or other settings in addition to elementary schools). The participants' post-graduate training in TEFL ranged from 120 hours to experience that included a one-year study in Canada. (See Appendix C for an individual listing of background information about the study participants.)

Data Collection

The standardized open-ended survey. As stated above, a survey was administered to elementary-school KTEs during an in-service teacher development program held at a university in a large metropolitan city in southern Korea. The term “standardized open-ended survey” (SOS) was coined in this study in an effort to differentiate the study’s survey instrument from connotations of closed-ended, statistics-oriented surveys. Patton (1990, p. 289) uses the term "standardized open-ended interview" to refer to interviews that consist of predetermined, unvarying, open-ended questions. Greene (1994, p. 532) uses the term "unstructured surveys" to refer to instruments that ask such questions as,
"Which part of the program work well, and which need improvement?" The semantic elements of the above two terms were selectively combined to create the study's "standardized open-ended survey," which consists of predetermined, unvarying open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth responses from participants regarding issues related to programs (in the case of this study, EFL education in Korean elementary schools).

As stated earlier, the SOS was administered to 100 KTEs, and 54 of the forms were returned. Through a similarly designed study previously conducted by the author, it was found that the relatively low return rate was mainly due to the qualitative (as opposed to a quantitative) nature of the survey questions: the time required to thoughtfully answer the items on an SOS is usually much greater than that required for a typical quantitatively oriented survey. Thus, many respondents balked at completing a survey that appears to require a significant amount of their time. A return rate of 54% may be judged to be somewhat low if a survey were quantitatively oriented (e.g., involving inferential statistics), but because the analysis of an SOS is primarily qualitative in nature, the return rate, per se, was not a critical concern, since making statistically based generalizations is not a purpose of the SOS.

For the SOS, an issue that is more important than the return rate is the absolute number of returned surveys. In other words, a higher return rate in and of itself will not necessarily result in more trustworthy findings, nor a lower rate necessarily result in less trustworthy ones. A more essential concern is collecting enough data to sufficiently enable the analysis of the phenomena studied, while, at the same time, being careful not to get buried under an unmanageably large amount of data, as warned by, for example,
Kvale (1996), Lather (1997), and Wolcott (1990). It was judged that sufficient data had been collected through the 54 returned responses, on the basis of the fact that no significant theme was newly discovered after approximately the first 30 responses were analyzed; the rest of the responses contained essentially the same patterns as the first 30, just in different words. Of course, theoretically speaking, no amount of responses to an open-ended survey can guarantee that all the information relevant to a study has been collected, since the emergence of new information is infinitely possible. Having said that, however, for practical purposes, the number of SOSs returned was deemed sufficient for this study.

The survey was open-ended and “participant-centered,” designed to give the respondents maximum freedom to voice their thoughts and beliefs regarding the survey questions. As was pointed out earlier in the “Statement of the Problem” section of chapter one, quantitatively oriented studies that surveyed elementary-school KTEs have been conducted. However, many of the studies suffer from a shortcoming of constraint, that is, they are “researcher-centered,” in the sense that such surveys are designed to reveal what the researchers want to know about a topic, which does not necessarily coincide with what the respondents want to say about it. This is a methodological problem and, perhaps just as importantly, an ethical one. Thus far, no study has yet given KTEs an opportunity to speak freely for themselves, and this study provided some of them with such an opportunity. To overcome this problem of “researcher-centeredness” in surveys, this survey asked seven open-ended questions and allowed the respondents maximum freedom to express their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings within the realm of the seven
questions (see Appendix A for the English version of the survey and Appendix B for the Korean version).

The surveys were distributed to the KTEs during the class time of the in-service program, but the KTEs were asked to respond to the surveys outside of class. This was for two reasons: (1) to avoid interference with the proceedings of the in-service program, and (2) to free the KTEs as much as possible from restrictions of time and space to explore their inner-selves regarding the survey questions. The survey was distributed to the participants during the second week of the four-week program, and the participants were asked to complete and return the surveys by the end of the third week of the program. To maximize the return rate, during the fourth (i.e., the final) week of the program, it was announced daily to the participants that the return of the surveys would be greatly appreciated.

[It should also be noted that a “Letter of Access” was not used in this study. Considering the customs of Korea, the request for “access” to the study participants was made by visiting the director of the in-service program and making a formal request in person, as opposed to by simply mailing a letter.]

A pilot study of the survey instrument. Although only the Korean version of the SOS was administered in the study proper, both the English and the Korean-translated versions were pilot-tested. The Korean version was administered to eight Korean teachers of EFL who teach in elementary schools. Of the eight, five were returned. Of the five returned surveys, the breadth and the depth of the responses varied: Some responses were very brief (one or two sentences per item) and somewhat superficial; others were much
longer (more than one page per item) and insightful. Overall, the pilot study demonstrated that the SOS was able to elicit a wide range of insightful responses, much of which is newly discovered (at least not published) information about the KTEs’ perspectives regarding the status of EFL education in Korean elementary schools.

Interviews. The overall purpose of the interviews was to collect information not obtained through the survey. In other words, the interviews attempted to clarify, probe, and confirm the responses stated in the surveys as well as in previous interviews. At the same time, however, the interviews were also flexible, in the sense that they were allowed to deviate from the planned topics if the interviewer or the interviewee judged a newly emerging topic to be important. In short, the interviews were directed by the following two main goals: (1) specifically following up the survey responses of individual interviewees, and (2) probing for and following up themes that emerged during the study as a whole, i.e., from the surveys, interviews, or document analyses. (See Appendix D for a sample excerpt from interviews with a study participant.)

Of the 54 teachers who returned the SOS, 29 agreed to post-survey interviews, and of the 29, 12 were interviewed. (Due to practical constraints of time and expenses, it was decided that not all of the teachers who expressed their willingness to participate in interviews would be.) Considering the two above-mentioned main goals for the interviews, the teachers who participated in the interviews were selected based on one or both of the following criteria. One, participants were selected whose survey responses warranted a follow-up, for instance, an elaboration or a clarification. Two, participants were selected whose survey responses were very articulate, whose responses showed
unusual insight, depth, and thoughtfulness. In short, interviewees were selected because their survey responses either required a follow-up or because they were promising providers of articulate insight.

In an effort to accommodate the interviewees, they were given a choice of either being interviewed in person or via email. Five of the twelve chose to be interviewed in person, and the other seven opted to correspond via email. (A discussion about the email interviews is presented in the following section.)

According to Kvale (1996), interviews are essentially conversations. As such, they should be collaborative (Eisner, 1988) and interactive (Lather, 1986). The in-person interviews in this study, therefore, were basically frank and informal talks. It is also notable that, despite the author's guarantee that their identities would be kept secret, two of the five participants who agreed to the in-person interviews granted them only under the condition that the interviews not be audio-recorded. In interviews with these two teachers, in place of audio-recordings, notes were taken during the interviews, then, to verify the accuracy of the notes, the author subsequently "member checked" (e.g., Janesick, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) with the interviewees the interview-based notes. In short, the interviewees and the interviewer co-reconstructed the contents of the non-audio-recorded interviews. The interviews of the other three participants, with their consent, were audio-recorded, and the recordings were later translated as necessary (i.e., only the parts of interviews directly relevant to the study were translated) and member checked.

Several researchers have warned against the excessive collection of data and the consequently insufficient analysis of the collected data (e.g., Kvale, 1996; Lather, 1997;
Wolcott, 1990). Wolcott states, "...we have to be careful not to get buried by avalanches of our own making... There is a division between qualitative researchers who want to impress upon students how much they can observe and those who place the emphasis on how well" (1990, p. 35, original emphasis). Regarding the over-collection of data, Kvale states, "The material is too extensive to overview and to work out the depth of the meaning of what was said. The analysis is too time-consuming and is likely to lead to a superficial product, unfinished due to external time limits" (1996, p. 178). Thus, regarding the collection and analysis of interview data, this study followed the rule of "collect less, analyze more."

**Interviews via email correspondence.** Email has been successfully used for interview purposes in the field of foreign/second language education (e.g., Liu, 1999). Regarding the use of interviews via email, Liu states:

> By using an e-mail interview format, the participants were given sufficient time to think about and reflect upon the issues and questions raised, and interactions between the researcher and each participant were therefore extended along the continuum of topic initiation, thinking, responding, probing, and reflection.

(p. 161)

As stated in the previous section, interviews with seven out of the total twelve interviewees were, at their preference, conducted via email. Email correspondence with the respondents ranged from one to four series of exchanges. In addition to the positive aspects of email interviews as discussed above by Liu, there is another rather obvious
benefit of interviews conducted via email: there is no need to transcribe the resulting data, since, unlike audio-recorded interviews, the data is already in text form.

Document search. In addition to the above-mentioned survey and interviews, documents were collected. According to Patton, “Document analysis in qualitative inquiry yields excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports, personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys” (1990, p. 10). It should be noted that Patton’s list is a broad one that includes open-ended surveys. While acknowledging the validity of their inclusion in the list, for the practical reason of categorization, this study differentiated surveys from other types of documents listed by Patton.

Elementary schools were the main sources of the collected documents. Such documents included newsletters to students’ homes, formal reports to the MOE, and intra-school memos. To obtain access to documents, the author personally solicited schools and requested the study’s participants to share with me any documents that they feel may help in “our” study.

Data Analysis

Because the data were collected mostly through open-ended questions designed to gather “baseline information,” the data were analyzed according to “grounded categories” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), as opposed to “a priori categories.” In other words, the information gathered
through the survey, interviews, and documents was coded according to "emergent understandings," i.e., themes (Denzin, 1994, p. 502). The analysis, or the interpretation, of the data, and the write-up of the study, even preliminary drafts, were done simultaneously, as complementary parts of an ongoing endeavor. As Denzin argues:

Interpretation is an art: it is not formulaic or mechanical. It can be learned, like any form of storytelling, only through doing. Indeed . . . writing is interpretation, or storytelling. Fieldworkers can neither make sense nor understand what has been learned until they sit down and write the interpretive text, telling the story first to themselves and then to their significant others, and then to the public. (1994, p. 502)

In an effort to reduce the possibility of the data analysis becoming "overly researcher-centered," two bi-lingual colleagues – both were native speakers of Korean: one was a professor with a Ph.D. in TESOL from a university in the U.S., and the other was an elementary-school teacher who had lived in the U.S. for approximately three years – participated in the analysis of the data. The issue of interpretation is further discussed in the section, "Trustworthiness/Validity."

The standardized open-ended survey (SOS). As stated above, the SOS was distributed during an in-service teacher training program. The data collection and data analysis were conducted concurrently. This was because one of the inherent characteristics of descriptive studies is to find emerging patterns as they arise during data collection, which in turn will guide the course of future data collection and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
This study is primarily qualitative in orientation and makes no claims of statistical
generalizability. However, to provide a sense of proportion about the participants'
responses regarding the study’s various emergent themes, a content analysis was
conducted to tabulate a frequency count of their responses. (Similar methodology has
been used in other L2 research, for example, by Katznelson et al. (2001) regarding
second language writing.) This analysis was performed in the following way. First, two
researchers – the author of this study and the above-mentioned professor colleague –
independently classified the survey data according to themes, using the same coding
method. Next, the analyses of the two researchers were compared. The classifications of
data that were in agreement were accepted as final decisions and included in the study’s	tabulations. In places where the two analysts disagreed, discussions were held to resolve
the differences. Where agreements were reached, the data in question was included in the
study’s tabulations. Where agreements could not be reached, the data in question was
excluded from the study’s tabulations.

Interviews. The interviews were selectively translated, following Lather’s (1997)
suggestion for transcribing. In other words, rather than translating all interviews in their
entirety, those passages that were judged to be unrelated or not immediately noteworthy
to the study were not translated. However, the untranslated portions of the interviews
were labeled by topic and tape-counter number, in case their further analysis is needed in
the future. The translated portions of the interviews were coded using the same method as
that used for coding the survey results, that is, by “themes.” The translations were
initially done by the author, who is nearly “equilingual” in Korean and English. However,
for sake of verification, the two previously mentioned Korean colleagues reviewed the translations. Further, the interviewees themselves were given an opportunity to review the translations through a member checking process. Although several of the interviewees had questions about the translated passages, none of them objected to the contents.

The translations of the interviews were written as informal conversations, as opposed to, for example, verbatim word-for-word coding or formally written reports. About selecting the most appropriate style of transcription, Kvale (1996) states, "There are no correct, standard answers to such questions; the answers will depend on the intended use of the transcript" (p.170). Because the interviews were essentially informal conversations, the translations were written in a way that preserved that tone.

Trustworthiness/Validity

To increase the probability that a study's findings will be trustworthy/valid, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest three activities: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation. Towards fulfilling the first two activities, this study simultaneously conducted data collection and data analysis for a period of approximately eight months. The third activity, triangulation, was conducted through multiple sources of data (surveys, interviews, and documents) and multiple agents of data analysis (myself, my two assisting colleagues, and the participant KTEs).

In addition, Janesick (1994) suggests two other means of improving the trustworthiness/validity of qualitative studies: member checking and leaving an audit trail. Member checking was accomplished by giving the participating KTEs an opportunity to review in the study's preliminary draft the passages that contained English-translated...
quotes based on their survey/interview responses, which were in Korean. As stated earlier, none of the participants objected to the quotes attributed to them. An audit trail was made by documenting the study through a researcher log and by making all documents and artifacts relating to the study – with the exception of those documents that could reveal the true identity of the people or institutions participating in the study – readily accessible to outside audits.

Ethics

This study mainly addressed three issues regarding ethics in research: researcher bias, reciprocity, and anonymity. First, researcher bias is a potential problem regardless of methodology, but the inherently interpretivist nature of descriptive studies makes researcher bias a particularly significant potential problem. To counter potential researcher bias, the study referred to Denzin (1989), who reasoned that “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) makes “thick interpretation” possible (in Janesick, 1994). To ensure not only thick interpretations but also the possibility of interpretations other than my own, the study presents in-depth descriptions of the participating KTEs’ thoughts and beliefs in their own words.

Second, as I the researcher stand to benefit from conducting this study, I wanted the participant KTEs to also benefit from the study. That is, this study was conducted with a spirit of reciprocity between the participants and the researcher (Fetterman, 1989; Patton, 1990). As an “expert” in teaching English, I felt obligated to work with the participating KTEs to help them with their teaching practice. As expected, some of the study participants requested assistance, usually in the form of asking for advice or suggestions,
with their classroom teaching during the study. However, because I did not want to influence their responses to my survey and interview questions, I had little choice but to withhold my views on EFL-related matters from them until after I completed my data collection, explaining to them my predicament, about which they were understanding. As stated above, in this study, data collection and data analysis were both intertwined and on going. Thus, in short, I shared my “expertise” with the participating KTEs, but, for the reasons explained above, not until a relatively late stage of the study.

Third, to protect the people and the institutions involved in this study, their identities have been changed; all the names of people and schools mentioned in this paper are pseudonyms. Thus, instances of the pseudonyms resembling real people and schools are purely coincidental.

Conclusion

Currently, teaching EFL is a daunting task for most KTEs who work in elementary schools. Though Korean educators (e.g., Lee, 1985) have argued that teaching EFL to elementary-school-level students should be done by qualified professionals trained in TEFL, the reality is that many KTEs in elementary schools are being directed by the MOE to do the best they can for the time being. Thus, KTEs critically need both pedagogical and moral support. KTEs can be given pedagogical support by being provided with teaching-related information, experiences, and resources. Moral support can be given by acknowledging and appreciating KTEs, by listening to and attempting to understand their side of the stories.
Too often, researchers begin a study with preconceived notions of what is important and what is not. However, when researchers ask their subjects closed-ended questions about a topic, they inevitably limit the subjects’ responses, and, more importantly, they can shape (or reshape) the subjects’ conceptions about the topic. Of course, ethical researchers do not consciously plan for such outcomes, but researchers do tend to begin a study with preconceived ideas because they usually search for abstract, generalizable findings. Such practice is not surprising, since most researchers today have been trained to do exactly that — that is, to discover “pure knowledge.” However, in research about human beings, attempting to find abstract generalizations comes at the high cost of neglecting the importance of the particular, the personal, the humanistic side of things. In summary, in addition to searching for ways to improve the EFL education in Korean elementary schools, by listening to, recording, and disseminating the voices of Korean teachers of EFL, this study attempted to give some of them overdue recognition for their professional contributions as individual human beings.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter, containing a synthesis of information gathered through SOSs (standardized open-ended surveys), interviews of elementary-school KTEs, and documents related to the study, is organized around the study’s six sets of basic research questions regarding the curriculum and teacher development in EFL education in Korean public elementary schools. The six sets of questions, three focusing on the curriculum and three focusing on teacher development, are as follows:

1. What have been the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the success be attributed?
2. What have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?
3. What should be done to improve the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools?
4. Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the successful aspects? To what factors can the success be attributed?

5. Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?

6. What should be done to improve the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools?

This chapter can thus be viewed as comprising of two inter-related halves: the first half focuses on issues primarily related to the curriculum, and the second half focuses on issues primarily related to teacher development. It should be remembered, however, that the topics addressed in this study do not exist independently of each other but as parts of a larger organic whole. Thus, the two halves are closely related, and, likewise, the topics and the subtopics within each part are closely related. As a result, discussions about a particular issue often inevitably overlap with those of others. However, for sake of organizing the presentation of the study, the topics had to be categorized, and categories necessarily impose limits. This categorization and the resulting somewhat arbitrary delineation of discussions were unavoidable, but it does not significantly interfere with the overall coherence of the chapter.

Three more points should be mentioned about the contents of this chapter. One, it should be noted that similar responses were not quoted redundantly. Thus, a single quote may represent the voices of several people. On the other hand, it should also be
remembered that an opinion expressed by an individual does not necessarily represent the opinions of others. Two, statements made by the study participants are presented in block quotes, and supplementary information deemed necessary to clarify the participants’ statements has been added within brackets, but parentheses within the block quotes were used by the participants themselves. Three, for sake of organizational clarity, the survey data and the interview data are presented separately within the sections. That is, in each of the following six major sections of this chapter, the survey data is presented first, then, if relevant interview data also exist, such data is presented in the latter part of the section.

Successful Aspects of the EFL Curriculum

This section of the chapter presents the study participants’ responses to the following research question: “What have been the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the success be attributed?” Many of the study participants stated that the EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools have been successful in various ways. However, it is also noteworthy that, in the view of some of the participants, nothing has been successful about the curriculum. It is also significant that 18 of the 54 participants wrote nothing in response to this question. Table 6 presents a frequency count of the participants’ responses regarding this research question.
Table 6: A frequency count of the participants’ responses regarding the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools (N = 54).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The implementation itself</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A positive adaptation to global trends</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising awareness about the importance of English</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of children’s English proficiency</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early age of introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic benefits</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective benefits</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity in educational opportunity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A means of developing elite human resources</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication-based curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-organized curricular content</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort-based student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean teachers from various educational backgrounds</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native speakers of English</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-cognitive benefits of learning a foreign language</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No positive aspects</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Implementation Itself

To three of the teachers in the study, the very fact that EFL was implemented at the elementary-school level in Korea was a successful achievement, and these teachers were optimistic about the future of EFL education in Korean elementary schools.

One successful aspect of the EFL curriculum has been getting beyond the stage of abstract discussions and allowing actual classroom studies. Soo-Jin Kim
First of all, the fact that English has been implemented as a regular part of the elementary-school curriculum was a bold move, a success in itself, and I believe that support and research concerning English education will result in more progress in the future. Yoo-Kyung Jung

It should be noted, however, that not all teachers felt that the introduction of the EFL curriculum has been a positive move. More about this opposing opinion will be presented later in the chapter.

**A Positive Adaptation to Global Trends**

Seven of the study participants stated that, due to the world-wide increase in the importance of English, introducing the EFL curriculum at the elementary-school level was a positive step towards preparing Korea for the future.

As a preparatory step towards the internationalization of Korea, I welcome the creation of the English curriculum in elementary schools. ... Sung-Ran Kim

Alongside teachers who embraced the introduction of the EFL curriculum as a necessary step towards the so-called internationalization of Korea, other teachers expressed concerns about its possible negative effects, including what Phillipson (1992) has called linguistic imperialism. These concerns will be discussed later in the chapter.

**Raising Awareness about the Importance of English**

Whether one likes it or not, it is difficult to deny that proficiency in English currently is and will be in the foreseeable future a key to socioeconomic success, both in and outside of Korea. Twelve teachers in the study commented that the formal inclusion
of EFL education at the elementary-school level has caused Koreans to become more aware of this important trend.

One positive aspect of including EFL in the elementary-school curriculum was that the process has made both young children and their parents aware of the necessity and the importance of English, thus causing them to be interested in English. Bong-Shik Choi

Many Koreans, especially those in higher social positions, have been well aware of the importance of English even before the subject became a regular part of the elementary-school curriculum, but its formal inclusion increased its importance even more in all strata of society. By including EFL as a regular subject at the elementary-school level, the government was in effect sending a strong message to the Korean people that learning English is important, and, judging by the immense popularity of English study in Korea, it appears that the government’s message has been well understood.

Development of Children’s English Proficiency

Perhaps an obvious positive aspect of adding the study of English to the regular curriculum of Korean elementary schools is the development of the school children’s English proficiency, and three of the study participants expressed related comments.

It has been said that the quality of education cannot surpass the quality of teachers, but it seems that, in the English education of today, children exceed their teachers in some ways. For example, the teachers can’t even greet the native-speaking English teachers at school (for whatever reasons), but you can see the children greeting them and even having short conversations with them – bravely! Yoo-Kyung Jun
However, as the next quote implies, some teachers are skeptical about the actual efficacy of an EFL curriculum that provides only 40 minutes (in grades three and four) to 80 minutes (in grades five and six) of instruction per week. Furthermore, because many of the parents of school children also share this skepticism, out-of-school private study of English is a very significant factor in EFL education in Korea.

Elementary-school students’ ability to speak English has gotten much better, although it’s not possible to say whether it’s a result of in-school study or out-of-school study. Yong-Hee Kim

The issues of out-of-school study of English and curricular evaluation will be addressed in greater detail later in this chapter and in the next chapter.

Early Age of Introduction

Some teachers specifically noted the school children’s relatively early age of introduction to English as a positive aspect of the EFL curriculum. Teachers commented on the linguistic and the affective benefits of offering English in elementary school, especially the fact that the studies begin from the lower grades.

Linguistic benefits. As mentioned in chapter three, curricular policies regarding EFL education at the elementary-school level in Korea have been influenced by the so-called “critical period” argument. Eight of the study participants responded about the linguistic benefits of teaching English to young school children.
By starting EFL education at an early age, the students’ language-learning abilities can be maximized, and studying English has become more efficient. So-Hee Kim

... by introducing English from the third grade, the children have been provided with opportunities to acquire natural native pronunciation from a young age. Jung-Yun Sun

Although debates about the “critical period” are still controversial (e.g., Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2001; Marinova-Todd et al., 2001), it is generally agreed that its implications for language acquisition depend on various preconditions, perhaps most importantly, on sufficient amount of exposure to the target language (Lightbown and Spada, 1999). However, as briefly mentioned earlier and as will be discussed in greater detail later, it is debatable whether or not the Korean elementary-school students’ current amount of in-school exposure to English—40 to 80 minutes per week—is sufficient enough for the critical period argument to be relevant.

Affective benefits. Fifteen of the survey respondents also commented that the students gain affective benefits by being exposed to English in school at an earlier age.

Because students are exposed to English at an early age, they have no fear about English, and they are able to approach it naturally and with curiosity. Myung-Hee Shin

... when I look closely at the children in my class [third grade], they seem to be interested in English. It doesn’t look as if they feel burdened by the subject. They pronounce “My name is . . .” like “mayonnaise,” but the fact that they at least seem to be having fun and are trying to use what they’ve learned can be thought of as positive results. Yoo-Kyung Jun

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Approaching English “naturally and with curiosity,” “having fun,” and “trying to use what they’ve learned” are in fact very essential parts of what the MOE envisioned when it outlined the primary-school-level EFL curriculum. It should be noted, however, that Myung-Hee Shin and Yoo-Kyung Jun are teachers of lower-grade (grades three and four) students, where the class work centers around “playing” with the English language. Another teacher describes this process as follows.

For sake of encouraging learners to have curiosity, interest, confidence, familiarity, etc. about English, various activities such as games, songs, chants, role-play, etc. are used. In-Hwa Shim

Whereas the focus of the class is play-centered in the lower grades, the focus becomes more “serious” in the upper-grades, where the content is more academic and students become introduced to reading and writing, ostensibly in preparations for EFL studies in middle school and beyond. As will be discussed later, many of the students in the upper grades, particularly those students who cannot keep up with the more academically rigorous work, lose interest in English and even come to dread studying it.

**Equity in Educational Opportunity**

Three teachers expressed optimism about the equity-related implications of starting English education from elementary school.

English used to be an exclusive possession of the rich, but now all children throughout Korea, especially those in rural areas, have the opportunity to learn it. So-Hee Kim

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Through [public] education, as with other subject areas, all children have been given an opportunity to acquire basic knowledge about English. Young-Joo Ahn

While it is true that educational equity was one of the arguments that helped EFL become a regular subject in Korean elementary schools, it is not clear whether or not its inclusion has in fact resulted in greater equity. In fact, as will be noted in the next chapter, the difference in the level of English proficiency between the wealthy and the poor students may be increasing, in large part due to out-of-school study that the students— at least those who can afford it— engage in in an effort to get academically ahead of their peers. Thus, ironically, the inclusion of EFL in the curriculum, with greater equity among students being one of the motives behind it, may have actually intensified the non-equity among the students.

A Means of Developing Elite Human Resources

In comparison to the teachers who viewed the introduction of EFL in elementary school as a positive measure towards establishing equity among students of all socioeconomic backgrounds, one teacher viewed the early introduction of EFL as a potential means of effectively developing elite human resources. Sung-Ran Kim felt that the EFL program in Korean elementary schools can be a good means of identifying as early as possible people—even if only an elite few—who show talent in English, who can then be actively helped to develop their potential, not only for the sake of the individuals but for the nation as a whole.
Even if it's not possible for all Koreans to become conversant in English, it's all right. Even if less than 0.1% of the Korean people become effective users, English study still provides a good opportunity for achievement, for individuals and the nation. . . . Introduce basic English [in elementary school] in order to discover talented people necessary for the future of the country, then separate the children who have interest and talent in English, and encourage their participation in 'elective' advanced-level activities. . . . Sung-Ran Kim

The comments by Sung-Ran Kim beg elaboration regarding equity- and ethics-related issues, for example, specifically who she thought the "less than 0.1% of the Korean people" might be, in terms of socioeconomic status, and what her thoughts were concerning the implications of limiting the "good opportunity for achievement" to such a small portion of the population. Unfortunately, however, she declined follow-up interviews.

Not all teachers, however, share the elitist view. In fact, one teacher specifically expressed concern against English becoming a means for the social advancement of the elite:

I hope that English education won't just be a way to become a social elite, but for the everyday use for the general public. Ga-Young Lim

Communication-Based Curriculum

From an educational system that had emphasized the so-called grammar-translation method in TEFL for more than a half-century, a significant turning point that co-occurred with the introduction of EFL into the elementary schools in Korea was a shift in the overall teaching approach towards one that emphasized authentic communication, especially oral/aural communication. Eight of the study participants stated that this shift.

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in the curricular approach has resulted in better communicative proficiency and more interest in English among the students.

Because sound-based education has been emphasized over a text-based one, the current students' speaking ability is much better developed than that of the students of the past. Jung-Yun Sun

In contrast to the grammar translation method, the current curriculum focuses on communication, and I think this new focus has succeeded in gathering student interest. Mi-Ra Oh

In short, like the benefits attributed to the early introduction of EFL studies at the elementary-school level, according to some teachers, the EFL curriculum’s communicative approach has resulted in both linguistic and affective benefits for the students.

Well-organized curricular content. In addition to teachers who expressed positive views about the communication-based curriculum in general, five of the participants praised the curriculum for more specific reasons: the functional usefulness of the study content, the ways in which the learning content has been organized and studied, and the teaching materials used to support the teaching and learning of the lessons.

The curricular content is organized around situations that children could commonly experience in real life. Joon-Hee Kim

The curriculum is systematic: the content progresses in repetitive cycles from simpler to more complex matter. Ji-Sook Jung
The textbook is organized well, compared to the textbooks for other subjects, and, because videotapes and cassette tapes come along with the book, I think teaching and learning can be facilitated. Joon-Hee Kim

Thus, it is apparent that some teachers had positive opinions about the current EFL curriculum. However, it should also be noted that other teachers had negative, sometimes very strongly negative, views about the curriculum. (The negative views will be discussed in the next section.) Clearly, the issues related to the EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools are complex and do not easily give way to simple conclusions.

Effort-based student assessment. Four of the teachers also spoke well of the way in which the students' progress is assessed for the subject of English.

In order to maintain students' interest in English and to reduce the anxiety that could result from learning English, the curriculum does not include formal testing of students' achievement. Dong-Ook Park

A good point about the current EFL curriculum is the fact that student evaluation is not outcome-based. In-Hwa Shim

In formal end-of-term report cards, students are evaluated in the following three areas for the subject of English: communicability, participation, and level of interest. Based on these three criteria, students receive one overall “grade” of “doing well,” “average,” or “needs more effort,” and may also receive brief specific comments. It seems, however, that such a grading system is not without problems.

On the one hand, compared to an assessment system that exclusively consists of formal, outcome-based (in the current context, discrete-item paper and pencil) testing, a
process-based evaluation system, especially when combined with specific comments for individual students, is probably the better approach. However, with an average student-teacher ratio of approximately 40 to 1, when a teacher studies with the students for only 40 to 80 minutes per week, it is questionable to what extent meaningful feedback can be given for individual students. In addition, formal (including discrete-item) testing in and of itself is not bad or good; what is more important is whether or not the method of evaluation matches the purpose of the evaluation (see, for example, Hughes, 1989). Thus, for grades three and four, where the students receive no exposure to English text, such a testing method may not be useful. However, for grades five and six, since the students are expected to learn basic reading and writing in English, such a testing method, again, depending on the purpose of the evaluation, may be ideal. Furthermore, from an administrative and policy-making standpoint, if informed decisions are to be made, outcomes of student achievement must be known, because student achievement is the ultimate measure of the efficacy of policies and their implementation. In sum, while the process-based approach to student evaluation currently in place is praise-worthy in intention, an exclusive reliance on such an approach has serious practical limitations, the implications of which will be discussed in chapter five.

Teachers

It is axiomatic to say that teachers are a key factor in the learning process of students. Regarding EFL education in Korean elementary schools, some of the study participants mentioned positive comments about the teachers.
Korean teachers from various educational backgrounds. One study participant commented that recruiting EFL teachers from various educational backgrounds has been beneficial.

The quality of EFL education in elementary schools has been improved by hiring English teachers who are graduates of universities other than universities of education. So-Young Shin

To fully understand the significance of the above statement, it would be helpful to remember from the previous chapter that, due to a severe shortage of qualified elementary-school EFL teachers, graduates of colleges of education (institutions that prepare secondary-level school teachers) and university graduates who majored in English language/literature were given special permission by the Korean government to teach EFL in Korean elementary schools. The government’s decision has been an ongoing source of debate and conflict in Korea, with many students and graduates of universities of education, fearing increased competition for jobs, opposing the decision to the point of holding national-level demonstrations. Suffice it to say that the above comments were made by a graduate of a college of education, and that there are many teachers, mostly graduates of universities of education, who disagree with her views. This problem of conflicts among teachers will be further discussed later in the chapter.

Native speakers of English. Two of the survey respondents commented that teachers who are “native speakers” of English have been an asset to elementary-school EFL education in Korea.
One successful point about the English education program in elementary schools is that, by introducing native-speaking lecturers into the classrooms, the students have been provided with many opportunities to speak in English under realistic situations. In an EFL setting, when we [specifically, the KTEs, but also "older-generation" Koreans in general] studied English, we didn't have much chance to speak and listen in English about what we learned, but through classes held with native-speaking lecturers, the necessity for English usage has been clearly shown. Also, by introducing English from the third grade, the children have been provided with natural native pronunciation from a young age. Jung-Yun Sun

The issue of "native" versus "non-native" English teachers has been a source of considerable debate in the field of L2 education (e.g., Braine, 1999; Medgyes, 1994). It should also be noted that, in Korea, only a very small number of foreigners actually teach in elementary schools: It may be recalled from chapter three that, at one point in the year 2000, there were only 188 foreign teachers of EFL in Korean public schools, and most of them taught in secondary schools, and the MOE's projected number of foreign teachers for the year 2001 was only 402 (Kim, J. S., 2000). Furthermore, as was also noted in chapter three, having foreign EFL teachers in Korean public schools has been problematic in a number of ways (Ahn et al., 1998). The issue of non-Korean versus Korean teachers of English will be discussed further in this as well as the next chapter.

Meta-Cognitive Benefits of Learning a Foreign Language

As mentioned above, several teachers have stated that the inclusion of EFL education in Korean elementary schools has contributed to the development of the school children's English proficiency. In addition to this perhaps obvious finding, three teachers mentioned other benefits of learning a foreign language.
and I think the best outcome about the implementation of the EFL curriculum is that it gives young children an opportunity to develop language-related awareness and talents that they may not even know they had. Sung-Ran Kim

Learning a [foreign] language is, before anything else, being receptive about a culture. So, through exposure to EFL, the children will wake up, earlier than before, to a wider world-view. Sung-Hae Lee

The views expressed by Sung-Ran Kim and Sung-Hae Lee have been corroborated by other professionals in second/foreign language education. That is, learning a language in addition to one’s so-called “native” language can enrich the personal development of the learners in a variety of ways, by, among other things, improving the development of their meta-linguistic awareness (e.g., Crystal, 1987; Lapkin and Swain, 1984), meta-cognitive awareness (e.g., Cummins, 1996), and by offering the possibility of showing the learners that the world they live in may be much larger than they have previously known (Tedick et al., 1993).

No Positive Aspects

It should be mentioned that not all of the respondents had positive things to say about EFL education in Korean elementary schools. One of the KTEs was strongly opposed to the inclusion EFL as a formal part of the curriculum at the elementary-school level and felt that there were no positive aspects of EFL education at that level.

First of all, I want to tell you that I respect you for your sincere efforts [in the dissertation-related research], and I want to be of assistance to you in your research. However, I oppose the formation of English education as a regular part of the
elementary-school-level curriculum, and I regret that I cannot tell you anything positive about the EFL program. Hae-Ja Kim

It is also noteworthy that, in addition Hae-Ja Kim, who explicitly responded negatively about the EFL curriculum, 18 of the 54 teachers wrote nothing at all in response to the survey question, “What have been the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the success be attributed?” Thus, taken together, the negative responses and the non-responses suggest that the EFL curriculum as it currently exists in Korean elementary schools has many obstacles to overcome.

Summary

This section presented what the study participants thought and felt to be the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools. The next section presents their views regarding the less-than-successful aspects of the curriculum.

Less-than-Successful Aspects of the EFL Curriculum

This section is devoted to the study participants’ responses to the following research question: “What have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?”

Regarding EFL education in Korean elementary schools, Hong (1997) identified ten problematic areas: insufficient amount of class time, a lack of a coherent curricular transition from elementary school to middle school and beyond, outdated instructional
approaches, inadequate research and development in the field, uninteresting instructional content, teacher-centered instruction, high student-teacher ratio, excessive use of Korean during EFL instruction, shortage of qualified full-time teachers, and teachers' negative attitude regarding TEFL. The KTEs who participated in the current study also expressed concern about some of the above-mentioned problems, as well as articulating some previously unknown ones. What is more, many of the teachers reacted enthusiastically to the study's open-ended questioning method and responded with depth and subtlety, thereby contributing to the enrichment of both heretofore unknown as well as known knowledge bases regarding EFL education in Korean elementary schools.

It is also interesting to note that some of the less-than-successful aspects of the EFL curriculum as mentioned by some of the KTEs in this study were also mentioned by other KTEs in the study as being aspects of success (cf., the previous section of this chapter). Rather than viewing such differences as inconsistencies or contradictions, they should be viewed as a reflection of the complexity of the issues and the diversity in the viewpoints of the KTEs. Table 7 presents a frequency count of the participants' responses regarding this research question.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problematic curricular planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate preparation prior to curriculum implementation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of stable long-term planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unclear curricular standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excessive catering to public demand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient solicitation of input from teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient local autonomy</td>
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<td>Insufficient coordination within the MOE</td>
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<td>Non-integrated inter-grade transition</td>
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<td>Within the primary-school curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Between the primary-level and the secondary-level</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications of the college admission process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problematic syllabus</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient amount of study time</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of attention to linguistic structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-integrated instruction of the four basic skill areas</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak relationship between English and other subjects</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninteresting lessons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of connection between English and students' lives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessively textbook-bound syllabus</td>
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<td>Problems with textbooks</td>
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<td>Lack of inter-grade integration</td>
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<td>Unrealistic linguistic content</td>
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<td>Lack of personally meaningful content</td>
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<td>Problems with supplementary teaching resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>The schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>A high student-to-teacher ratio</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disparities in English proficiency among students</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of moral leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of public trust in public education</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inequity among schools</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>An environment that creates apathy towards English study</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excessive Private Study of English</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
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<td>Conflicts between teachers of different educational backgrounds</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deterioration of morale</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>A shortage of qualified EFL teachers</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate Research Specific to the Korean Context</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

Table 7: A frequency count of the participants' responses regarding the less-than-successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools (N = 54).
Problematic Curricular Planning

Many of the teachers in the study expressed dissatisfaction with the curricular policies or the policy-making process for the EFL education in Korean elementary schools. The issues they mentioned may be classified as follows: inadequate preparation prior to curriculum implementation, lack of stable long-term planning, unclear curricular standards, excessive catering to public demand, insufficient solicitation of input from teachers, and insufficient local autonomy. (Another issue, insufficient coordination within the MOE, will be discussed later in a discussion based on the interview data.)

Before these issues are presented, however, it should first be noted that discussions about curricular planning – the issues of “how” – cannot be separated from those about curricular content – the issues of “what.” Nevertheless, for sake of categorical organization, the issues relating mainly to curricular planning/policy will be discussed in this section, and issues relating mainly to the curriculum’s syllabus will be discussed later in the chapter.

Inadequate preparation prior to curriculum implementation. In contrast to the teachers who felt that the implementation of EFL education at the elementary-school level in Korea was a successful achievement in itself, seven of the participants stated that the move was made without sufficient preparation, which resulted in problems that could have been avoided or lessened with more careful foresight. Jung-Yun Sun, a young teacher who graduated from a university of education in 2000 with a bachelor’s degree in English education, had the following insightful criticism about this issue.
... Since English was introduced into elementary schools in 1997, English education has become a required subject area at universities of education, so most of the people who attended a university of education before 1997 have almost no experience of systematically learning about English education; at most, only the people who chose to minor in English education may have learned a little about English. If plans had been made to implement English education at the primary-school level in 1997, then instead of having the students at universities of education study English education from 1997, they should have been receiving instruction about it three to four years prior to that time. That is, at least if the government had expected success in teacher development. Jung-Yun Sun

The next quote is by another teacher who spoke about insufficient curriculum planning by the government.

It is regrettable that the English education curriculum is an improvisation, not one planned with a 5- to 10-year vision. The EFL curriculum and teacher development at universities of education should have been [better] prepared before the implementation of the curriculum. It would have been good if the curriculum . . . had been better inspected before being put into effect. Young-Joo Ahn

In fact, English had been studied in many Korean elementary schools for several years prior to 1997. The Sixth National Curriculum, which went into effect in 1995, allowed individual elementary schools, at the discretion of the schools' respective principals, to offer the study of English as something more formal than an extra-curricular activity. In other words, from as early as 1995, the national government de facto permitted local schools to begin offering the study of English as a quasi-formal subject.

The MOE also in fact officially piloted the EFL curriculum in selected schools prior to implementing it on a national level. However, pilot programs have been known to serve largely for the sake of creating an appearance for the public, without necessarily
having much impact on real change (Popkewitz, 1982). Regarding the case of piloting the EFL curriculum for Korean elementary schools, many Korean teachers may agree with Popkewitz.

In short, inadequate, shortsighted planning by the government, with the attitude of “Let’s fix it as we go,” has resulted in problems for individuals, schools, and the nation as a whole. These problems, as mentioned by the study participants, are described more specifically in the following pages.

**Lack of stable long-term planning.** As of July 2001, president Kim Dae-Joong’s third year in office, his cabinet had had six different ministers of education, with four of the personnel changes occurring within a one-year span. In Korea, frequent cabinet changes are not unique to the post of minister of education, and such changes are due to various reasons, including public dissatisfaction with a minister’s apparent lack of competence, and strategic compromises among various political parties.

Under such conditions of extreme instability in educational leadership, there is little likelihood that long-term curricular policies will be created, much less seen to fruition. This is because, in terms of political self-preservation, there is little incentive for those who must ultimately take the responsibility (or blame) for policy decisions to attempt to create and nurture long-term plans, while there is great temptation for them to focus on short-term gains, since the policy-makers are placed under tremendous political pressure to “make their mark” quickly, with visible results, lest they be replaced soon by others. At the same time, because those in educational leadership positions are well aware that their stay in office, for whatever reason, will probably be short, many of them are
tempted to simply “ride out” their time in office by avoiding being responsible for the creation of controversial policies, many of which may have long-term implications. Five of the teachers in the study responded about this problem.

The biggest problem [about the EFL curriculum] is the short-sighted vision of policy makers who always just try to put out the nearest fire. Not only do the educational authorities change very frequently, but after they get into office, since educational policies do not show immediately visible results, they try to avoid (evade?) their responsibilities. This is a serious problem. Sung-Hae Lee

According to Rodgers (1989), “. . . failures in program innovation are not as often failures of content as failures of contextual planning” (p. 24). Seen in this light, this lack of stability in educational leadership and the consequent lack of consistent long-term planning for the EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools appear to be critical problems.

Unclear curricular standards. A likely result of a curriculum that lacks coherent long-term planning is that such a curriculum may have unclear standards for student achievement. This shortcoming was in fact mentioned by one of the teachers in the study.

. . . Of course, the teachers should use their ability to revise and adapt the teaching content for actual classes, but the limits of the [curricular] standards of achievement are ambiguous. I think that a detailed and specific proposal for standards of achievement by grade or by proficiency level is needed. Soon-Young Son

Soon-Young Son’s opinion is mentioned here because the primary goal of this study is to provide a forum for the KTEs to voice their views about EFL education in Korean
elementary schools. However, in defense of the MOE, the ministry actually does have fairly specific grade-by-grade standards for student achievement regarding elementary-school EFL education, as outlined in chapter two of this study. Thus, it seems that a significant number of KTEs may not be aware of the existence of the MOE’s guidelines for standards of student achievement, and the responsibility for this lack of awareness by the teachers should be shared by the unknowing teachers and the MOE: the teachers for not being up-to-date on basic professional knowledge, and the MOE for not making sure that all KTEs are informed of its important mandates regarding EFL education.

In any case, the real problem to be confronted here appears to be less a matter of standards, per se, and more a matter of how to assess to what extent the various parts of the established standards are being met. As stated earlier in the chapter, to lessen student anxiety about learning English, the current curriculum states that student assessments must be process-based, as opposed to outcome-based, and no formal testing is allowed. However, although the MOE’s intentions are laudable, an exclusive reliance on a process-based approach to learner assessment, also known as “formative evaluation” (Nitko, 1989), creates a dilemma: Under these limited assessment conditions, with no information gathered through outcome-based “summative evaluation” (Nitko, 1989), especially on a large scale (e.g., national or provincial level), it is impossible to make generalizable assessments about the EFL curriculum, which is a problem in and of itself, but it in turn also means that there is a critical limit to the range of informed policy decisions that can be made about the curriculum. These limitations are clearly related to the issues of testing and assessment, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.
Excessive catering to public demand. The previous discussions about politics in curriculum planning show that educational decisions are political decisions, an assertion that is hardly new, especially among critical theorists in general education (e.g., Apple, 1990; Freire, 1987). Regarding the elementary-school EFL curriculum in Korea, three of the teachers in this study suggested that the educational policies are overly influenced by public pressure and that the policies do not sufficiently take into account relevant research findings or practical constraints. As one teacher states,

... In the context of globalization, as communication-based English study became formalized in public education [at the elementary-school level in Korea], the English-learning phenomenon, within an atmosphere of much actual progress and high expectations, is becoming increasingly intense. However, one gets the feeling that... the EFL curriculum as declared by the Ministry of Education is unrealistic and largely only for sake of public appearance. Bong-Shik Choi

Bong-Shik Choi’s implication that Korea’s EFL-related policies in public education are being guided more by public demands than by sound empirical evidence has also been noted in other countries experiencing an “English boom.” For example, discussing the teaching of EFL in Israeli public elementary schools, Spolsky and Shohamy (1999) state,

Unfazed by a study showing that students starting English in Grade 4 were achieving a little better than those beginning in Grade 3 (Shohamy & Saar, 1995), the Tel Aviv Municipal Department of Education continued to expand the early start programme [in grade 3] in response to parental demand. (p. 179)

Under similar influences of political expediency in Korean public education, many KTEs lack faith in the MOE’s motives and in turn the efficacy of many of its mandates,
and some of these teachers are likely to engage in "subversive teaching" (Wrigley, 1993, p. 461).

The lessons mandated by the government are too fun- or activity-centered; there is a fixed belief among policy makers that visually attractive activities should be emphasized, and that reading and writing should be excluded from the lessons [in the lower grades] . . . In my case, I purposely taught phonics to my students during brief, in-between times in my lessons, but there wasn’t nearly enough time for it. Min-Hae Kim

In sum, as shown by cases from Korea and Israel, the most popular political decisions are often not necessarily the wisest ones, but abiding by them is the expedient cost of choosing to live by the fundamental laws of a democratic society. However, it nevertheless seems that, while the will of the people must be respected and followed as much as possible in a democratic society, educational policies should reflect a compromise between what the public wants and what is good for the public, something which, with its political and philosophical/ethical implications, is admittedly easier said than done, because an essential precondition for achieving such compromises is that all the parties in the decision-making process must engage in frank, informed, and on-going dialogue towards common goals, which is also often easier said than done.

Insufficient solicitation of input from teachers. The topic of this section is one of the basic reasons why this study was undertaken in the first place. That is, three of the study participants stated that educational policies in Korea do not sufficiently include teachers in the decision-making process.
The public education in our country is almost always a passing-down-of-
commands-style. It's in the style of, "Just do as you're told; you've got to do it
anyway; front-line teachers, do what you have to do." This is not just in English
education. As a new teacher ten months in the school system, [I have seen that]
there is too much that is unreasonable and frustrating. . . . Regarding English
education in our country, no one's words are more trustworthy than those of front-
line teachers. Yoo-Na Lee

In addition, as Yoo-Na Lee's statement suggests, it seems reasonable to conclude
that KTEs who feel that their opinions and those of their colleagues are not sufficiently
included in the curricular policies affecting them may have negative feelings about the
educational system in which they work, feelings that could include cynicism, resentment,
frustration, general low morale, etc. Such problems clearly have negative implications for
public education.

Insufficient local autonomy. Historically, public administration is Korea has
followed a rigid top-down approach, and this approach is still strongly reflected in the
way the MOE directs the operations of the national curriculum. The old trends, however,
appear to be changing. According to the Seventh National Curriculum, in effect from
academic years 2000 through 2004, the MOE intends to shift more power from the
central ministry to the local schools. However, two of the teachers in the study appeared
to be somewhat skeptical about the announced changes, and to what extent the individual
schools and teachers (and the local community, including the students) will be able to
create and implement more self-determined, autonomous decisions remains to be seen.

The new national curriculum is supposed to grant more autonomy to students and
teachers, but according to the teachers who have used the pilot version of the [new]

textbooks, there is not much difference between the previous textbooks and the new ones. Un-Sook Ji

Un-Sook Ji’s views are also notable because it appears that, at least for her, the main EFL textbook is largely the de facto EFL curriculum. This implies that, the MOE’s announced plans notwithstanding, purported changes in the curriculum, especially those related to the syllabus, have little real meaning if they are not reflected in the textbooks. This example again shows the need for a curriculum to be coherent, in which its policies, syllabus, and system of assessment are harmoniously integrated.

The discussions in this section highlighted the need for coherence and coordination in curricular planning. The next section focuses on one key aspect of curricular coherence: inter-grade transition.

Non-Integrated Inter-Grade Transition

One necessary characteristic of a sound curriculum is that it is coherent, that is, all of its various components must be integrated within one consistent system (Johnson, 1989b). Furthermore, not only should a curriculum be integrated within itself, but it should also be harmonious with other curriculum to which it is related. However, some KTEs have stated that the EFL curriculum for Korean primary schools lack coherence, not only among the four grades in which English is studied, but also in relation to the curriculum of secondary- and tertiary-level education.

Within the primary-school curriculum, Several KTEs stated that the EFL curriculum in the lower grades (grades three and four) are “play-centered,” with very
little instruction about the formal aspects of English. Such a curricular orientation may not appear to be a problem in and of itself, but eight of the teachers point out that it is problematic in practice because the English learned in the lower grades is "too easy" and thus do not adequately prepare the students for what they say is the more "academic" (i.e., text- and form-based) study encountered in the upper grades (grades five and six).

The curriculum for grades three and four are too easy and are play-centered. So-Hee Kim

[In grades three and four,] there is no introduction of English text. Han-Na Bae, In-Ja Oh

The curriculum for grades five and six are more "formal study-based," with text written in English. Students are expected to begin reading simple words. Han-Na Bae

The difficulty level of the English content in the fifth and sixth grades is too high, so many children lose interest in English. I think this presents a big obstacle against the achievement of the goals of the EFL curriculum. Joon-Hee Kim

To improve inter-grade transition, that is, to help student progress more smoothly from one grade to the next, some teachers have recommended that the four basic areas in language usage — reading, writing, listening, and speaking — be taught from the outset of EFL education, i.e., from grade three. More about the integration of the four skill areas will be discussed later in the chapter.

Between the primary- and the secondary-level curriculum, eight of the participants also expressed concern that the elementary-school EFL curriculum does not adequately
prepare students for EFL studies at the secondary-school level, where the curriculum emphasizes much more heavily the formal aspects of English.

... English education was introduced into the elementary-school curriculum with the plan of sequentially connecting it to the middle-school curriculum, but some people have suggested that the elementary-school curriculum, with its exclusion of text-based learning and the study of grammar, is fundamentally weak and does not help the students much in preparing for English education in middle school. Jung-Yun Sun

It should be noted that Jung-Yun Sun’s statement about the “exclusion of text-based learning and the study of grammar” is partially inaccurate. While it is true that the EFL curriculum at the elementary-school level does not heavily emphasize text-based instruction and it does in fact exclude the systematic instruction of English grammar, the curriculum certainly does not completely exclude text-based instruction. However, many parents and teachers do share Jung-Yun Sun’s concern that the primary-school-level EFL education may not adequately prepare children for EFL studies at the secondary level. This widespread concern, distrust even, has resulted in many elementary-school children being pushed by their parents to study English privately, usually in hagwons.

The schools are teaching [English] according to the mandated curriculum, but the students, to prepare for middle school, are studying grammar-based lessons through private institutes. Dong-Ook Park

In short, the curriculum at the primary-school level, ostensibly designed mainly to promote “fun” learning of oral/aural English, does not appear to adequately prepare the students for the secondary-level EFL curriculum, which, because of its connection to the
nationally administered college entrance examinations and the examinations’ format for testing English skills, is still mainly focused on text- and form-based study.

Implications of the college admission process for the primary-level curriculum. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Korean educational system, from pre-school through high school, is to a great extent centered around preparing students for the nationally administered college entrance exams. Thus, the “washback effect” (Hughes, 1989) of “teaching to the test” is an important factor in curriculum planning in Korea, and one teacher in the study noted this in her survey response.

The issues related to problems in English education in Korean elementary schools cannot be discussed in isolation . . . because all education in Korea inevitably goes back to college admissions. Min-Hae Kim

As Min-Hae Kim rightly points out, curricular policies for public education in Korea at the primary-level, as well as at the secondary-level, must be planned in consideration of their implications for college admissions.

The study participants’ comments indicate that the shortcomings in inter-grade transition are closely related to problems with the syllabus of the curriculum. These syllabus-related problems, as noted by the study participants, will be discussed next.

Problematic Syllabus

In the earlier discussion regarding problematic curricular planning, the issues about policies were in the foreground and those about the teaching content were in the
background. The two topics are again inevitably combined throughout the discussions in this section, with one important difference. Here, the issues related to the teaching content will be in the foreground, and those about policies will be in the background.

Regarding the less-than-successful aspects of the EFL curriculum, many teachers in the study expressed dissatisfaction with the current EFL syllabus, with "syllabus" being somewhat broadly defined as "... a statement of content which is used as the basis for planning courses of various kinds ..." (Nunan, 1988b, p. 6). The problematic issues that the study participants mentioned are organized as follows: insufficient amount of study time, lack of attention to linguistic structure, non-integrated instruction of the four basic language skill areas, a weak relationship between English and the other academic subjects, and uninteresting lessons. In addition, two more issues – a lack of connection between English and the students' everyday lives, and an excessively text-bound syllabus – will be presented later, in the interview part of this section.

**Insufficient amount of study time.** From 1997 (the year EFL became a regular subject at the elementary-school level) to 2001, students studied EFL twice per week for 40 minutes per session. From 2001, following the mandates of the Seventh National Curriculum, the study time for grades three and four has been reduced to once per week (grades five and six maintained the twice-per-week schedule). Twelve of the study participants stated that the current amount of study time is insufficient.

For me – I'm currently a sixth-grade dam-im teacher – when I think about the status of the kids in my class, very few of them understand the English they're studying in their textbook, and kids who can speak the English that is in their textbook are
extremely rare. . . . Studying English two hours per week is not very effective. In the study of our own language, Korean, even though we study six hours per week, there are still many children for whom the subject is hard and who thus lose interest. At minimum, English should be studied for more than three hours per week, but in the Seventh National Curriculum, the weekly study time for the third and fourth grades has been reduced! Yoo-Kyung Jung

In addition to the limitations placed on learning new content, another result of this insufficient study time and the consequent time gaps between lessons is that students are likely to forget much of what they have learned in previous lessons.

The current two-hours-per-week English study lacks continuity. There is too much wait time until the next lesson, and so the children forget the previous lessons. . . . According to the Seventh National Curriculum, even the two hours per week has been reduced to one hour per week for the third and fourth grades, and I worry about just how much effectiveness can be expected under the new curriculum. Does a one-hour-per-week English curriculum really even need to be offered in elementary school? Yoo-Kyung Jun

The issue of "time on task" has been discussed in both general education (Good & Beckerman, 1978) and in the field of TESOL (Richards, 1987). As Richards states, "Not surprisingly, studies of time-on-task have found that the more time students spend studying content, the better they learn it" (1987, p. 213). In sum, those who determine the amount of study time for EFL education in Korean elementary schools, as well as those who evaluate its effectiveness, should realistically consider the goals and standards for it in light of the learners' limited time on task.

Lack of attention to linguistic structure. Regarding the problematic areas in EFL education in Korean elementary schools, one of the shortcomings that Hong (1997) listed
was "outdated instructional approaches," in other words, teaching in a way that did not
directly promote the learning of communicative proficiency, especially oral/aural
competence. The MOE's response to increasing public criticism that echoed claims such
as Hong's was to mandate that the English curriculum at the elementary-school level (and,
for that matter, at the secondary-school level) be "communication-based," emphasizing
listening/speaking skills while de-emphasizing the systematic study of linguistic structure
(e.g., grammar). Such a shift in the curriculum was welcomed by many teachers.
However, two teachers in the study expressed concern that the shift may have gone too
far in the opposite direction.

Because grammar is not addressed at all in the study of English in elementary
school, there is a large gap between the practical syntax needed by the children and
what they can actually understand and use. This gap is one cause of learning
difficulty for many of the children. So-Hee Kim

In a similar vein, these teachers were concerned that the emphasis on oral/aural
communication has made many teachers value fluency at the expense of neglecting the
establishment of a solid linguistic base.

Because the main goal of the current EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools
is enabling oral communication, there is a tendency to emphasize fluency while
somewhat neglecting phonics and other basic things that students must know. I
think that teaching students more of the basics is like teaching them how to fish [as
compared to giving them fish - i.e., enabling greater learner independence in the
learning process]. Jin-Un Lee

The thoughts expressed by So-Hee Kim and Jin-Un Lee would likely receive support
from many in the field of foreign/second language education; that is, one of the
prevailing paradigms in the field is that, unless specific pedagogical purposes dictate otherwise, ideal foreign/second language instruction should combine the study of both linguistic functions and linguistic forms (e.g., Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1990).

Non-integrated instruction of the four basic language skill areas. In statements that are closely related to the above-mentioned concerns about the EFL curriculum's lack of attention to the structural aspects of English, ten teachers in the study commented that the curriculum lacks integration of the four basic language skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Because sound-based education is emphasized over text-based education, compared to past students of English, the growth in the speaking ability of the current students can be considered a success. However, the elementary-school English curriculum excessively emphasizes only sound-based education, and text-based language, the foundation of all language education, has been neglected. In all languages, learners progress little by little and naturally come to become interested in written texts, but because writing has been excluded from the third- and fourth-grade curriculums, if the children are to be taught according to the curriculum, then their desire for learning written language cannot be satisfied. Jung-Yun Sun

Ironically, as the next quote further shows, it seems that the curricular restrictions on the study of written text – restrictions implemented mainly in an attempt to maximize the development of the learners’ listening/speaking skills – may have actually constrained the learners’ development of their listening/speaking skills.

The current curricular policy of placing restrictions on the integrated study of the four skill areas is not right. In the case of the third grade [where written texts are not a part of the official curriculum], one can sometimes see instances where students’ listening comprehension or pronunciation problems can be relatively
easily solved by teachers' introduction of written text. [Another teacher, Joon-Hee Kim, had a very similar opinion, and she even provided an example problem. The word "drink" was mispronounced as "drim" by some students in her third-grade class; she said she easily corrected the problem by showing the students the differences in the English spelling between "nk" and "m".] Having said that, however, for the lower grades, it is right to somewhat limit the teaching of written text. Jin-Un Lee

Further, as suggested below, the public elementary-school curriculum's non-integration of the four basic skill areas in English (i.e., the de-emphasis on the learning of reading and writing skills), especially in grades three and four, has in effect placed a large part of the burden of reading/writing instruction on the private education sector, most commonly, through hagwons.

Because there is no study of reading and writing in the third and fourth grades, ... unless the [third- and fourth-grade] students receive out-of-school private lessons, it's hard for them to further their English. Young-Joo Ahn

The concerns expressed by the above teachers have a sound educational basis. Many experts in language education, for example, proponents of the whole-language approach in general education (e.g., Goodman, 1986) and in TESOL (e.g., Rigg, 1991), have argued that a language is an organic entity, and teaching and learning it in separated discrete parts – i.e., where the four basic skills are not integrated – is both unnatural and inefficient. Instead, they argue that language should be taught in ways that integrate the co-development of the four language skills.

A weak relationship between English and the other academic subjects. Five teachers in the study pointed out that English as an academic subject is not well
integrated with the other subject areas in the elementary-school curriculum. For one thing, combined with the fact that the school time allocated to the study of English is minimal, some teachers worry that if the study of English is not reinforced by opportunities to use it outside of the English class, not much learning will accumulate.

The two-hours-per-week study of English is not connected to other subject areas or times, so the accumulation of English-related knowledge does not occur, and the school environment is not set up for the students to put to use what they have learned during the English lessons. Young-Joo Ahn

As mentioned in an earlier discussion about the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum, some teachers did state that learning a foreign language benefited the students in a number of ways. On the other hand, one teacher worried that having young children learn English at an early age may have a detrimental effect on the learners’ development of the Korean language.

Won’t the study of English cause confusion for children, for whom their national language is not yet firmly established? Also, there is a worrisome possibility that including English as a formal academic subject in the elementary-school curriculum may promote a tendency to neglect the study of the national language. Yoo-Kyung Jun

It is difficult to overstate the Korean people’s current zeal for learning English, and Yoo-Kyung Jun’s concern that the study of English may be excessively emphasized at the cost of neglecting other equally important subject areas is a valid one. However, the implication that the Korean students’ learning of English (i.e., their L2) may impede the development of their Korean (i.e., their L1) is based on a misunderstanding of L2.
learning, one that does not differentiate between second-language versus foreign-language contexts. In second-language contexts, issues such as the loss/attrition of a language learner’s L1 are very important. However, in foreign-language contexts such as learning English in Korea, especially considering the very limited amount of study time involved, there is little possibility of loss/attrition of the language learners’ L1.

Furthermore, research findings in bilingual education (e.g., Herbert, 1987) and immersion programs (e.g., Lapkin & Swain, 1984) have shown that, under appropriate educational conditions, learning a second or foreign language can assist or, at worst, does not harm, the learners’ development of their first language. In addition, not only do the learners of a second/foreign language appear to do at least as well as their monolingual peers in academic subjects relating mainly to language, they also seem to do as well if not better than their monolingual peers in apparently less language-related academic subjects such as math. Such findings clearly have implications for EFL education in Korean elementary schools.

Uninteresting lessons. It has been pointed out in another study that uninteresting instructional content is one of the problems in the elementary-school EFL curriculum (Hong, 1997). According to one KTE who participated in the present study, it seems that many children do in fact easily lose interest in studying English, which is clearly a problem, especially since creating interest in the use of English is one of the explicitly stated goals of the national curriculum (MOE, 1997).
There are many instances where the children become bored because the curricular content is not [cognitively] appropriate for them. Young-Joo Ahn

Thus, as seen in Young-Joo Ahn's comments, one of the causes of students' loss of interest seems to be that the curricular content does not match the students' cognitive/intellectual maturation level. In other words, the students think like third (fourth, fifth, or sixth) graders, but the study tasks they are usually exposed to in English class— for example, saying hello and good bye, singing children's songs, following chants, playing simple games, etc.— are often too "childish" for them. Such tasks may be interesting initially as novelties because they are done in a new language, but, over time, as the novelty wears off, the mismatch between the students' cognitive/intellectual level and the tasks' lack of sophistication is felt by many of the students, and their interest can quickly wane.

The previous discussions suggest the importance of an integrated relationship among a curriculum, its syllabus, and resources for learning. The next section discusses the problems related to the EFL textbooks used in Korean elementary schools.

Problems with Textbooks

The MOE's mandate for a communication-oriented EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools has in turn dictated that the government-approved official textbooks used in the classrooms must also be communication-oriented. That is, the textbooks should be a means of learning and communicating in English what is personally relevant and meaningful for the students. However, several teachers in the study pointed out weaknesses in the currently used textbooks. The issues the study participants mentioned
have been classified as follows: lack of inter-grade integration, unrealistic linguistic content, and lack of personally meaningful content.

**Lack of inter-grade integration.** In discussions that paralleled those about the shortcomings regarding the lack of curricular coherence among the four grades in which English is taught in Korean elementary schools, three teachers in the study also mentioned that the EFL textbooks in the elementary schools lacked integration among the four grades.

The ones [main textbooks] for grades three and four are too easy; they are play-centered. . . . The ones for grades five and six are more “formal study-based,” with English text. Students are expected to begin reading simple words. . . . The transition between the play-centered textbooks of the third and fourth grades and the more serious textbooks used in the fifth and sixth grades is too abrupt. Going into the fifth grade, many students — twenty to thirty percent — get left behind, that is, are unprepared for serious study, unless they get private help at home or at a hagwon. Han-Na Bae

Because the EFL textbooks used in Korean elementary schools are such an integral part of the EFL curriculum and the syllabus, it is not surprising that teachers expressed concern about the lack of inter-grade coherence in the textbooks, since similar concerns were expressed about the overall curriculum’s lack of inter-grade coherence. In sum, one of the patterns that emerged repeatedly throughout the study was that the “play-oriented” studies of the lower grades should be better integrated with the more “academic-oriented” studies of the upper grades.
Unrealistic linguistic content. According to one teacher, another problem with the textbooks seems to be that they do not always reflect realistic linguistic content.

The English curriculum did not consider the cultural differences between our country and English-speaking countries. [For example,] Currently, the textbooks contain examples of sentences that are not used in the U.S. So-Hee Kim

One of the fundamental tenets of a communicative approach to foreign/second language learning is that the linguistic content should be authentic or realistic. However, unrealistic passages of English dialogue in school textbooks have long been a problem in Korea. To overcome this problem, native-speakers of English are now usually included in the editorial committees that oversee the publishing of EFL textbooks in Korea. However, it appears that the problem still persists.

Lack of personally meaningful content. Concerning the EFL textbooks currently in use in Korean middle schools, one middle-school teacher stated, “Because . . . textbooks . . . are written and edited mostly by university professors, the textbooks rarely contain specific teaching methods that can bring out lively responses from the children. Most of the passages are disconnected from the everyday feelings of today’s kids” (In S. H. Kim, 2000). In Korea, because the process for creating EFL textbooks for middle schools is very similar to that for elementary schools, it was not surprising to find a teacher in this study stating that the contents of the EFL textbooks used in the elementary schools often do not relate to the students’ lives in a meaningful way.
The content of the textbooks must be student-centered. That is, related to the students' lives, not just be classroom English. The textbook by itself is inadequate in this regard. Jin-Mi Kim

Richard-Amato (1996) suggests thirteen questions one should ask when selecting textbooks for second/foreign language study. One of the questions is as follows: “To what extent are the students encouraged to relate the content to their own lives and to their prior knowledge?” (p. 288). The results of the current study seem to indicate that the current EFL textbooks used in Korean elementary schools may not sufficiently allow the content to relate to the lives of the students.

In addition to problems related to the EFL textbooks, some teachers in the study also expressed concern about supplementary resources. The latter issue will be discussed in the next section.

Problems with Supplementary Teaching Resources

In discussions about teaching resources, seven teachers in the study stated that not enough usable materials are readily available to supplement the contents of the main textbook. Two teachers added a slightly different observation, stating that supplementary materials are available, but that the teachers themselves lack the knowledge to capitalize on the resources.

It's very hard to find supplemental teaching material that is related to the content of our textbook, and making materials for activities — for example, for story telling or book making — requires a lot of time and effort. We've been told that it's OK to teach in various ways, using our own discretion, but I wonder about how many teachers actually have enough interest in English to invest time and effort into
preparing for it when we have to teach ten other subjects besides English. Myung-Hee Shin

(It should be noted that Myung-Hee Shin is a dam-im teacher, which is the reason why she is concerned about lesson preparations for so many other subjects in addition to English. In comparison, for jun-dam teachers of English, even if they teach grades three through six, they would only need to prepare six different lessons per week (one lesson per week for grades three and four, plus two per week for grades five and six), which is not a small number, but it is far less than the twenty-plus lessons per week that dam-im teachers must prepare. Thus, one of the arguments supporting the exclusive utilization of jun-dam teachers for EFL education in Korean elementary-schools is that, unlike dam-im teachers, jun-dam English teachers can direct their time and effort towards preparing and delivering a much smaller number of different lessons, which, it is assumed, will improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the teaching.)

While Myung-Hee Shin’s comments should be respected as they are, they should also probably be qualified. That is, regarding problems related to supplementary teaching resources, another opinion among the teachers in the study was not that there is a shortage of supplementary materials, per se, but that they do not know well how to use the available materials.

There is no lack of teaching materials, per se, but I don’t know how to use the available resources very well. Han-Na Bae

There are a lot of supplementary resources, but not enough usable resources. Basically, I have the teacher’s guide to the main textbook, which I depend on a lot. In-Ja Oh
Thus, regardless of the cause of the problems related to supplementary materials — whether the problem is an actual lack of materials or the teachers’ lack of knowledge about how to use them — the result seems to be the same: In the absence of supplementary teaching materials that teachers feel comfortable using, they are likely to overly rely on their textbooks. One of the implications of this situation is that pre- and in-service training of EFL teachers should address this problem by showing the teachers the wide range of supplementary materials available and helping them make better informed, more effective use of such materials.

The Schools

The quality of a school may be judged in part by the extent to which it supports the well-being of the students who attend it and the teachers who work in it. However, some of the teachers in the study expressed dissatisfaction with the schools in which they worked. Some of their complaints were specifically related to English education; other complaints were more general. The following two issues will be discussed here: a high student-to-teacher ratio and disparities in English proficiency among students. Four other school-related issues — lack of moral leadership, lack of public trust in public education, inequity among schools, and an environment that creates apathy towards English study — will be discussed later, in the interview part of this section.

A high student-to-teacher ratio. In an earlier study focusing on the shortcomings of EFL education in Korean elementary schools, a high student-to-teacher ratio was identified as one of the most significant problems facing the EFL program (Hong, 1997).
Likewise, two teachers in this study also stated that the current student-to-teacher ratio in the elementary schools was a barrier to effective teaching and learning of English.

It's unreasonable to have English class with approximately forty students in one class. If a teacher's aid could be additionally utilized in class, then it might be all right, but one teacher guiding a forty-student class in a subject that requires a lot of material and activities will lead to results that are contrary to the basic objectives of English education. Yoo-Kyung Jung

It should also be noted that, although the student-to-teacher ratio in Korean elementary schools is currently targeted at 40:1, in reality, there can be a wide disparity in the ratio among schools. To illustrate, it has been found that the student-to-teacher ratio among elementary schools in the metropolitan Seoul area as of the year 2001 ranged from 20.7 to 52.6, a nearly 150% difference between the lowest and the highest ratios (H. N. Lee, 2001). Of course, this disparity in student-to-teacher ratio among schools also has implications for educational inequity.

The Korean government agrees with the teachers that the current student-to-teacher ratio in the public schools is excessive. In fact, it has recently announced plans to lower the student-to-teacher ratio in the public schools (primary and secondary levels) to 35:1 by academic year 2003 (H. J. Kang, 2001c), and it plans to do so partly by building 1,202 more schools by the year 2004 (H. J. Kang, 2001b).

With increasing national prosperity over the years, Korea has been able to gradually channel more money into public education, and, as a result, the student-to-teacher ratio in public schools has been steadily declining. To illustrate, in the 1970s, it was not uncommon to find a student-to-teacher ratio of 70+ to 1 in elementary schools. Seen in
this light, although there is still room for improvement, a ratio of 40 to 1 seems to be a remarkable improvement in a span of three decades.

**Disparities in English proficiency among students.** Another problem identified by thirteen of the teachers in this study is that the students come to school with significant differences in their level of English proficiency. For instance, many of the school children have received formal instruction in English even before entering elementary school, and many have not. Such circumstances can cause problems for both the teachers and the students.

It was an unreasonable attempt in the first place to try to provide uniform instruction to nearly forty people in one class. Due to the English education "boom," there are children who have learned not only the English alphabet but also basic everyday expressions before even entering elementary school, and there are also children who enter school with no prior exposure to English. Placing children with such differing starting points in one classroom, with one teacher trying to lead them in a uniform way, for only two hours per week, presents many problems.

Yoo-Kyung Jung

Due to private education, the children’s proficiency levels vary infinitely. Although advanced and remedial curriculums are being offered, the reality in the field is that the provision for level-appropriate study is inadequate. Soon-Young Son

... As a result [of significant differences in English proficiency among students in a class], the students lose interest in English early: the high-level students, because it’s too easy; the low-level students, because it’s too hard. In-Hee Jo

There can be significant differences in students’ English proficiency within a classroom, but there may also be significant differences at the inter-school level within a school district. The following comments were made by a teacher who worked in a mostly low-middle-class district:
Socioeconomic background plays a key part in students’ readiness for learning English, since the students from more affluent families are more likely to study English privately than students who are from less affluent families. Han-Na Bae

Lastly, disparity among students can exist on a still broader level, between urban and rural/provincial school districts.

In urban areas, the children come to school after first receiving private education, and the kids have no interest in in-school learning, because they have already studied the school material before coming to school. Bong-Shik Choi

Bong-Shik Choi implies that the children who live in rural/provincial areas are not as school-ready as the kids who live in urban areas.

Clearly, the problem of disparity in English skills among students is closely related to the problem of inequity in educational opportunity. These issues are further discussed in the next section.

Excessive Private Study of English

In Korea, where there is a high level of public dissatisfaction about public education, an unwanted (but not altogether unforeseen) side-effect of including EFL as a formal subject in the elementary schools has been the explosive growth in the number of students privately learning English outside of school. To those who are unfamiliar with modern Korean society, this may not appear to be a problem; indeed, it may appear that
students learning an academic subject both in and out of school is a desirable educational outcome. However, as can be seen through the quotes below, many Koreans, educators and non-educators alike, think that the phenomenon of out-of-school private studies by students is extremely excessive, to the point of literally endangering the public education system and the stability of the Korean society itself. Thirteen teachers in the study discussed this problem.

Our country is a nation of education. The parents of students have a great passion for education, and the reality is that out-of-school education is becoming more active, surpassing the government’s curriculum. The quality of public education is, for our country as a whole, at the very lowest level. . . . Bong-Shik Choi

The fact that the students are provided with language-related experiences is a point of success, but I feel that, based on my teaching experience, [public] school education is nothing more than the minimal consideration by the government for students who can’t have private education. In-Hee Jo

As is true in most modern societies, social advancement in Korea depends largely on one’s educational background, especially at the tertiary level. As a result, most Koreans are ultra-competitive when it comes to education for themselves and their family members. Because of the intense competition and the fact that many Koreans distrust the public education system to prepare their children for high-quality life, a very high proportion of Korean students study not only English but also many other subjects privately in educational institutes outside of school. This social competition in Korea, a capitalistic society in which wealth is certainly not distributed equally among its citizens, has resulted in a widening of the gap in educational opportunities between the wealthy and the poor. Under such circumstances, many Koreans feel that they have little choice
but to invest as much as they can in their and their family's education, of which the learning of English is an essential part.

For many parents, the common thinking goes like this: "Since our kids now know Korean, let's invest intensively in English." In my class, at least twenty [more than 50%] of the students attend private English-study institutes. The in-school study time has been reduced to one hour per week, and so this further intensifies private study and aggravates the endangered status of public education. Ok-Hee Do

The amount of money spent on private English education is extraordinary – on a national level, the amount is astronomical. So-Hee Kim

A recent study by the Korean Consumer Protection Agency (in G. C. Lee, 2001) found that the average per-household monthly expense for children's private English study was 88,000 won. To put this amount into a better perspective, the Korean per capita gross national income for the year 2000 was approximately 12 million won, or roughly one million won per month. (According to the World Bank, the Korean per capita gross national income in U.S. dollars for 1999 was $8,490, which ranked 54th among the 207 countries about which reliable statistics were available.) This means that an average dual-income Korean household spent approximately 5% of its gross income solely for its children's private English education, which is indeed an astoundingly high figure.

The challenges facing public education in Korea make not only learning but also teaching difficult. The next section addresses problematic issues related to another essential part of any educational endeavor: the teachers.
Teachers

It goes without saying that teachers are a critical part of any educational endeavor. This section addresses issues related to teachers – as opposed to teacher development – as a part of the elementary-school curriculum. The two issues – teachers and teacher development – are obviously interconnected, but, for the sake of organization, the former, as it relates to the elementary-school curriculum, will be discussed in this section, and the latter, as related to teachers’ personal and professional development, will be discussed later in the chapter. Two issues – conflicts between teachers of different educational backgrounds, and deterioration of morale among teachers – will be discussed below. Another important issue, a shortage of qualified EFL teachers, will be discussed later, as a part of the interview data.

Conflicts between teachers of different educational backgrounds. Currently within Korean elementary schools, there often exists a subtle – and at times, not so subtle – division between dam-im teachers and jun-dam teachers of English, especially jun-dam teachers who did not attend a university of education. Three jun-dam teachers in the study, such as Sung-Hae Lee, who majored in English language and literature at a general university – as compared to a university of education or a college of education – have stated that they often feel like outsiders among their dam-im peers.

Although this is a personal story, [after one year and four months at the current school] I still feel like oil in a pool of water – I feel somewhat awkward, and I worry that I’ll never fit in with the dam-im teachers. People talk about me from two views: some say that I’m in an unfortunate situation, because I’m not being fully accepted by my dam-im colleagues; others say that I am fortunate, because I got a
highly coveted job, through ten-something-to-one competition. Of course, it all depends on how you look at it. Sung-Hae Lee

From the opposing position, two of the study participants who were dam-im teachers said that they do not approve of elementary-school teachers who do not have specific training in working with elementary-school children. As one bluntly stated,

One of the problems with primary-level education in Korea is that the Korean government permitted the inflow of secondary-level teachers into the elementary schools, citing a shortage of teachers as an excuse. It was an administrative move that ignored the fact that, at the primary-level, methods of teaching are especially important. Because primary-level education has its own professional uniqueness, teaching at this level is best done by competent elementary-school teachers who have been trained specifically for primary-level education. Young-Joo Ahn

This latter quote seems to indicate that the actual cause of the resentment expressed by some dam-im teachers towards their jun-dam peers may be less based on whether or not a teacher is a jun-dam, per se, but more on whether or not a teacher is a graduate of a university of education. In other words, it is much less likely that dam-im teachers would resent a jun-dam teacher if the jun-dam, like them, were a graduate of a university of education. It also appears that, in addition to the issue of professional qualifications, the conflict between some dam-ims and jun-dams is to some extent due to a competition for jobs, because allowing the graduates of general universities or colleges of education (who usually are, by national law, tracked to teach at the secondary level) to teach at the primary level is tantamount to opening the competition for scarce jobs to a much greater number of competitors. Naturally, the dam-im teachers, as well as the students at universities of education, resent the additional competition, since, although the
government has allowed secondary-level teachers to teach at the primary level (albeit in limited numbers), it has not reciprocated the arrangement. That is, primary-school teachers have not been permitted to seek jobs as secondary-level teachers.

Finally, one other teacher in the study did not take sides in the jun-dam versus the dam-im conflict; she simply stated that the matter was a problem. The next section describes another serious problem mentioned by several KTEs in the study: the problem of low morale among teachers of English.

Deterioration of morale. Two teachers in the study indicated that the introduction of English education into the Korean elementary schools and the hype and the expectations that accompanied it have resulted in the deterioration of morale for many teachers. It appears that one specific cause of this decrease in morale is the heavy pedagogical and psychological burden that the teaching of English places on teachers, particularly the older teachers whose command of English is virtually non-existent. According to one study participant, such teachers have questioned their personal and professional self-worth as a result of having to teaching English.

The introduction of English education in elementary schools has created a gap between old teachers and young ones, with the older teachers feeling inferior and alienated. This is one of the reasons that otherwise capable teachers with strong professional backgrounds – with the exception of the ability to teach English – have chosen early retirement. So-Hee Kim

One teacher also commented that some governmental policies regarding EFL education have caused a decrease in morale among teachers.
Inconsistent governmental policies regarding English education have lowered morale among teachers. For example, placing secondary-level English teachers into primary schools have weakened the profession of primary-school teaching; and, according to the Seventh National Curriculum, English is only taught once per week. So-Hee Kim

The reasons for the deterioration of morale among teachers are no doubt complex, and the causes probably do not exist independently of each other, but rather as a constellation of connected factors. In addition, it appears that the policies blamed by some teachers for the morale problem – for instance, permitting “outsiders” to teach in elementary schools and decreasing the amount of time English is studied in the third and fourth grades – are in fact manifestations of two deeper problems surrounding elementary-school EFL education in Korea. One, as So-Hee Kim stated above, the governmental policies related to English education have been “inconsistent,” that is, many of the policies have not reflected a stable, long-term vision of the curriculum. The teachers often literally wake up in the morning to find that they must adapt to yet another significant change in the curriculum, which in turn may be changed again soon. In short, unstable educational policies contribute to feelings of uncertainty, frustration, and loss of morale among the teachers. The other deeper problem is that, judging by many of the top-down, unilateral policies that the government mandates to the schools, the opinions of classroom teachers are not valued much by policy makers. Again, such practice creates ill feelings among teachers.
Inadequate Research Specific to the Korean Context

This section addresses one last major theme regarding shortcomings in the EFL curriculum of Korean public elementary schools. According to four of the teachers in the study, English education in Korean elementary schools has not been sufficiently informed by research specific to the Korean context. The following comments were made by a teacher who was concerned about the uncritical adoption of ESL pedagogical practices for Korea, which clearly has its unique circumstances and needs.

It's a fact that the teaching methods or models adopted by our country's EFL education community are mostly those based on ESL situations. Of course, this is a problem for the Korean professionals in the English education field, but there is a strong impression that international [i.e., non-Korea-specific] language teaching methodologies are used here in Korea without critical analysis. . . . it seems to me that the most critical project for our profession is to conduct research to find teaching methods that fit the realities of Korea's English education. Min-Hae Kim

In short, an educational system that may be appropriate for a non-Korean context may be inappropriate for the Korean context. Thus, while the potential usefulness of learning and borrowing from ESL settings or other EFL settings outside of Korea should be acknowledged, decisions about importing foreign ideas and materials must consider the unique contextual factors of Korea, and informed decision-making about the applicability of foreign materials necessarily requires careful research.
The discussions presented thus far in this major section of the chapter have been based on the study’s survey data. The remaining part of this major section is devoted to discussions based on the study’s interview data.

**Interview Data**

The results of interviews with the study participants complemented the data collected from the survey part of the study. The discussions in this section focus on the following nine issues: insufficient coordination within the MOE, an explanation about the reduction in study time, a lack of connection between English and the students’ everyday lives, an excessively textbook-bound syllabus, a lack of moral leadership in schools, a lack of public trust in public education, inequity among schools, a school environment that creates apathy towards English study, and a shortage of qualified EFL teachers.

**Insufficient coordination within the MOE.** In addition to the other earlier mentioned problems regarding the Korean government’s planning of the EFL curriculum for the nation’s elementary schools, another concern was expressed by a teacher who complained about insufficient coordination among the various departments within the MOE.

Jin-Mi Kim: The MOE lacks communication and coordination within itself.
Don: Why do you say that?
Jin-Mi Kim: Recently, I was required to participate in two training programs at the same time; the programs had overlapping schedules. Apparently, the MOE didn’t realize until too late that two of the departments within the ministry itself made directives without consulting each other.
On one hand, it is unrealistic to expect that an endeavor as complex and large-scale as that involving the planning and the implementation of the EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools can be expected to be completely free of mistakes. On the other hand, precisely because such work is so complex and grand in scale, it is important to constantly maintain close communication and coordination among all the departments within the ministry.

An explanation about the reduction in study time. It was noted earlier in the chapter that, according to many teachers in the study, the amount of time English is currently studied in Korean elementary schools is insufficient. The following conversation provides insight into the reason for the reduction in the study time and how the freed-up time is being used.

Don: As you know, according to the Seventh National Curriculum, the time for the study of English in Korean elementary schools has been reduced from two periods to one period [per week] in grades three and four. Do you know the reason for this decrease?

Mi-Ra Oh: According to the Seventh National Curriculum, it’s not just the study time for English that decreased. The study time for English decreased by one hour [actually, one 40-minute period] in grades three and four; the same for math in grades five and six; social studies, grades five and six; natural science, grades four, five, and six; wise living, grades one and two; happy living, grade two; and home economics. The reason for the decrease was that, to lessen the burden of schoolwork for teachers and students, the minimum amount of study time per subject and grade has been reduced or adjusted. The schools can implement the curriculum with flexibility, and, to my knowledge, I don’t know of any school that is teaching English for more than one hour [in grades three and four].

Don: I have a follow-up question, then. If the class times have been reduced, what are the students – and the teachers – doing with the freed-up time?

Mi-Ra Oh: The time for “student activities according to individual teacher’s discretion” has increased. There are five types of these activities – “self-
study,” “adaptation,” “development,” “public service,” and “special activities” – and each school can independently implement these activities. At our school, we have student discussion groups, club activities, and one teacher teaches students how to play the recorder [a flute-like musical instrument].

More about this issue will be discussed in the next major section of the chapter, “Suggestions for Improving the EFL Curriculum.”

A lack of connection between English and the students' everyday lives. It was mentioned earlier in the chapter that some teachers in the study were concerned about the very limited amount of time students study English in school. In a related topic, two teachers pointed out that the students in Korea, an EFL context, have very little opportunity to use English outside of their English classes, and, because the in-school study – which is already very limited in terms of study time – is not reinforced with out-of-school practice, the effectiveness of the current primary-school-level EFL education may be insignificant. The following is an excerpt of an interview with one of them.

In-Hee Jo: My personal opinion is that since Korea is an EFL situation and if the schools can’t provide students with sufficient financial support nor the environment needed for the optimal learning of English, the current English education in elementary schools is no better than the methods of the old days. It’s only going to result in confusion for the students and the teachers.

Don: I don’t understand. What do you mean by, “the methods of the old days?” As you know, English was not taught in Korean elementary schools before 1997. By “the methods of the old days,” do you mean the way English used to be taught in middle and high school? If so, can you tell me more about the method? Or, do you mean that EFL should not be taught in elementary schools at all?

In-Hee Jo: I think that the English I learned in middle and high school – memorizing grammar, vocabulary, and whole sentences – compared with the English
the kids in elementary schools are learning nowadays, through games, songs, and other various activities – since English can’t be used anywhere anyway, don’t the two methods result in the same thing? Maybe I’m being narrow minded. . . . The important thing is – and this is of course only my opinion – not how something is taught with what materials, but the time after lessons are over. When I look at the students, even the students who are falling behind in general have fun during English class and follow along, trying hard, and many students achieve the goals for a given lesson. But when the students are asked the same questions during the next class time, they’re right where they were before. They all have the expression of, “Have we done this before?” I wonder if, had they been provided with opportunities to listen to and speak in English in their everyday lives after their lessons, would they be the same?

It could be thought that public education has no obligation for students’ education outside of schools, or that there is not much that public education can do about the linguistic environment – EFL or otherwise – of its students. While this may be partly true, this nevertheless does not free educators or policy makers from the obligation to think about ways to help the students maximize their potential under their given circumstances. For instance, the MOE could sponsor research on matters such as how best to help students use the English they learned in school in their everyday lives.

**Excessively textbook-bound syllabus.** In addition to the earlier mentioned problems regarding the current EFL syllabus for Korean elementary schools, another weakness was noted by two teachers in the study: they felt that their pedagogical initiatives were too constrained by the pressure to cover all of the content in the main textbooks.

Han-Na Bae: I wish I didn’t have to use the main textbook at all . . . I wish I could use all of my own material.
Don: Why do you say that?
Han-Na Bae: Because the textbooks are too limited and limiting.
Don: Then why don’t you use more of your own material?
Han-Na Bae: Because the expectation is that the students should study through the entire book, and there is not enough time to cover the whole book and do other things, too.
Don: Who has these expectations?
Han-Na Bae: Everyone – the principal, other teachers, the students, and the students’ parents.

According to not only the MOE but also the traditions of public education in Korea, the teaching content in a syllabus does not necessarily have to be limited to the contents of school textbooks, but, at the same time, the contents of the textbooks must nevertheless be the core material for the syllabus. This is the reason why many teachers feel that, despite being encouraged by the MOE to use various activities to teach English, the textbook is the de facto syllabus. One implication of this fact is that changes in curricular policy have little chance of being implemented as intended if they are not integrated with the contents of the curriculum’s textbooks. This discussion demonstrates the close relationship among a curriculum, its syllabus, and textbooks.

Lack of moral leadership in schools. Speaking about public education in Korea, one teacher in the study strongly criticized those in leadership positions in schools – principals, vice-principals, department heads, etc. – for lacking the courage to take firm action on behalf of the best interests of the students. The following excerpt from a conversation between me and Ji-Sun Roh sheds some light on this topic. (It is noteworthy that, at the time of the interview, Ji-Sun Roh was and had been for several years an active member of the Korean Teachers and Educational Workers Union, which, with approximately 70,000 members (as of June, 2000), is Korea’s largest teachers’ union.

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The union, from its establishment in 1989, was declared an illegal organization by the essentially military government, which condemned its alleged radical activities. The union only gained legal status in 1999, following the so-called "democratization" of Korea. In short, Ji-Sun Roh had been an active member of an outlawed teachers' organization, a membership to which could have resulted in harsh punishment, such as being fired from her teaching position with no legal recourse, or even imprisonment.

Ji-Sun Roh: The report that I gave you is the censored version. [At this first-ever meeting between us, Ji-Sun Roh and a colleague of hers had given me copies of official documents—reports pertaining to the status of English education at their respective schools—that they submitted to the principals of their schools, who in turn sent them to the Ministry of Education, which regularly requires such reports from all public schools throughout Korea.] My first draft contained much stronger, more critical language, but both the principal and the vice-principal at my school objected to the content, and I had to soften the tone and even delete some of the content of the report.

Don: Do you think incidents of censorship are common in schools in Korea?

Ji-Sun Roh: Education in Korea doesn't change, because people don't change. In my ten years of teaching, I've met only one administrator, the principal at my previous school, who truly had the best interest of the students at heart. All the other administrators that I've known have been more interested in keeping up a good image of the school, so that they won't look bad in formal reviews. In short, most administrators in schools are not professionals. They don't have the courage, the conviction, to do the right thing.

Don: What exactly did you say in the first report?

Ji-Sun Roh: The original one contained a lot of suggestions for improving the English program at my school, some of which could have been implemented almost immediately without much difficulty in terms of finance or governmental bureaucracy. But, the principal at my school, who has the authority and the means to implement many of my suggestions, completely disregarded them.

Under such circumstances, it is little wonder that Ji-Sun Roh was skeptical about possibilities for improvement in Korean education. Such lack of faith in the schools'
leadership is corroborated by comments from other teachers who expressed distrust in the educational system in general, as discussed below.

Lack of public trust in public education. Six teachers in the study indicated that they do not trust the public education system to adequately educate its students. The term "distrust"—as compared to, for example, "dissatisfaction"—was explicitly chosen by several teachers, as in the following exchange.

Mi-Ra Oh: Even we teachers don't trust the [public] education system for our own children's education.
Don: Could you say more about this?
Mi-Ra Oh: From 1995 to 1998, I illegally tutored two students; it was illegal because, at the time, only college students, including graduate students, could legally tutor students for money. I taught a male middle-school student and a female student, and the male student's mother was a teacher in a public middle school. At the time, the male student was also receiving separate private tutorials in mathematics. ... I think his mother knew well that her son could not stay at the top level among his peers with just in-school study. Many teachers think that it's hard to get into college with just in-school education. I also think that.

Indeed, distrust in public education is a widespread problem in Korea. According to a recent large-scale survey of 1,827 subjects (elementary-school teachers, middle-school teachers, high-school teachers, high-school students, and parents of school children), approximately 85% of the teachers, 83% of the students, and 73% of the parents responded that the Korean government's educational policies for public schools are not trustworthy. In contrast, only 3% of the teachers, 5% of the students, and 7% of the parents stated that they had trust in the educational policies (in B. H. Kim, 2001).
The above comments by Mi-Ra Oh may thus indeed reflect many teachers’ distrust in the adequacy of the public education system, but they also seem to exemplify the intense competition among students in Korea for academic superiority, to the degree where teachers of public schools would commit an illegal act for the sake of their children’s education. To the minds of many Koreans, obtaining a public education, which, by definition, exists to provide basic education to all citizens, is inadequate as a means for individual socioeconomic success, because obtaining a “basic” education at best only prepares its possessors with opportunities to obtain “basic” means of making a living, that is, occupations that offer little potential for social advancement. This problem further demonstrates that educational issues are in fact sociopolitical issues.

Inequity among schools. Another complex problem with the Korean elementary schools is the existence of inequity among the schools. In the following quote, Ji-Sun Roh, a teacher who has a strong interest in the rights of children, describes this problem.

Don: Can you tell me a little about your working conditions?
Ji-Sun Roh: . . . The public schools in the city I work in are categorized from “A” to “D” “grades,” with “A” being the best. The ‘grades’ are supposedly based on student achievement (“sung-chwi-yoo”): All public schools receive government funding, but the amount of funding (“sung-gwa-gm”) a school receives depends on the extent to which it meets the various goals mandated by the MOE. This system of funding exacerbates “the rich get richer, the poor get poorer” phenomenon, because the schools whose students come from affluent homes tend to meet more of the government’s mandates — for example, student achievement on standardized tests — than schools whose students are from less affluent homes. This difference is largely due to the fact that the students in more affluent districts are more likely than the students in less affluent districts to have access to out-of-school study opportunities, for example, in private institutions.
The situation described above by Ji-Sun Roh too often creates a vicious cycle of inequity in the public education system because the poorer schools, which tend to have a higher proportion of at-risk students who could benefit from special study opportunities (for instance, remedial classes), are likely to receive less government funding per student than the richer schools.

An example of a “D” grade school in the city mentioned above is the Nam-Jung Elementary School. Records at the school showed that middle school is the terminal level of education for more than 30% of the students’ parents. This is in shocking contrast to the national norm, which, according to recent statistics, showed that 95% of all Koreans between the ages of 25 to 29 have completed middle school (Kang, 2001a). Most of these minimally educated parents are limited to menial jobs that not only limit what they do, but also greatly limit what their children can become. The facilities at this school, from its infrastructure to its computer room, are inferior to those in more affluent school districts, but there is little possibility that the school will soon receive government funding in levels that will put its facilities on par with the more affluent schools.

An environment that creates apathy towards English study. In a country that is extremely interested in the study of English, it was somewhat surprising to find a teacher in the study who felt that the school in which she taught had an apathetic attitude towards the study of English. The following is an excerpt of a conversation with Jin-Mi Kim, a bright and energetic jun-dam English teacher.
Jin-Mi Kim: My school, from the principal on down, had a very apathetic attitude towards English education. For example, the school spent about 30 million won [approximately 20,000 U.S. dollars as of 2001] to create an English-learning lab several years ago, but the lab was unused until last year, when I got assigned to the school and asked the principal if I could use the facilities. No one at the school was interested in using the lab. Basically, the lab was a decoration; it was for show, for when visitors came.

Don: What was the reason for the apathy, in your opinion?

Jin-Mi Kim: I think it was a case of no one wanting to take the initiative. What I mean is that, everyone here [at the school] of course wants the English program to succeed, but no one was willing to take charge of the work and the responsibility for it.

Don: And why do you think no one was willing?

Jin-Mi Kim: Because the work would be very hard...

At the time of the interview, Jin-Mi Kim was teaching at a school where, prior to her arrival, English had been taught by individual dam-im teachers. When the following three facts are considered, it is understandable why it would take an extraordinary dam-im teacher to use a language lab or otherwise go beyond the minimum required call of professional duty. First, in addition to their non-teaching duties, dam-im teachers must prepare twenty-plus lessons per week in up to ten subject areas. Second, according to many teachers in the study, among the up to ten academic subjects that dam-im teachers must prepare lessons for, English is by far the most difficult one. Third, many teachers feel that they are grossly underpaid and under-appreciated. The implications of this predicament will be presented in greater detail later in this chapter and in the following chapter.

A shortage of qualified EFL teachers. One trend in EFL education in Korean elementary schools is a movement away from having English taught by dam-im teachers and replacing them with jun-dam English teachers.
Most schools have jun-dam English teachers, and, in the majority of cases, the upper grades [grades 5 and 6] are taught by the jun-dam teachers in the jun-dam teachers’ classroom. Yoo-Kyung Jung

It may be true that most schools have full-time teachers of English, but to what extent these teachers are qualified is a different matter. Fourteen teachers in the current study corroborated Hong’s (1997) findings that qualified EFL teachers are in short supply in Korean elementary schools. The less qualified teachers can be broadly classified into two types: dam-im teachers, and jun-dam teachers who may be proficient in English but who have little training in working with primary-school-age students. The basic problem of the first group is that, while they may be experts in working with elementary-school children, they lack expertise in teaching English. The basic problem of the second group is the reverse of the first group: These jun-dams may be expert communicators in English, but they lack expertise in working with young children. The following excerpts from separate conversations with two teachers, In-Ja Oh and Han-Na Bae, serve to illustrate their respective shortcomings and the consequences. In-Ja Oh is a dam-im, and Han-Na Bae is a jun-dam.

In-Ja Oh: I have insufficient knowledge about English and the cultural background that goes with English, so I have little confidence as an English teacher. As a result, I depend a lot on the main textbook.

Don: Please clarify that for me. What is the connection between your lack of confidence and your dependence on the main textbook?

In-Ja Oh: I use the main text a lot because I feel relatively safe doing text-based work.

Don: Safe?

In-Ja Oh: Yes, at least by preparing a lot, I understand the content and can explain it to the students.
Of course, conducting lessons based on the main textbook is not a problem, per se, but it is a problem when teachers feel the need to over-rely on them because they lack the expertise to deviate from them. The following exchange with Han-Na Bae, a first-year jun-dam teacher who majored in English language and literature at a relatively prestigious Korean university, reveals a different kind of problem.

Don: What are some of the problems you are having teaching English?
Han-Na Bae: The hardest problem is managing the class.
Don: If asked, could you conduct your classes entirely in English?
Han-Na Bae: Yes. English is not the problem; classroom management is.

Han-Na Bae's difficulties with classroom management could largely be attributed to the fact that she is a first-year teacher. However, other teachers in the study worried that, in addition to classroom management-related problems, for example, maintaining discipline, having teachers who are proficient in English but who have little expertise in working with elementary-school-age children will result in difficulties for the teachers and, more importantly, for the students.

... In an in-service training program for English education, I saw that when elementary-school teachers did mock lessons, their English was clumsy and not so good, but their lessons were very fun and I myself felt like learning more English. ... After seeing some teachers who were trained for secondary-level education do the mock teaching, I felt that there was a problem with placing secondary-level teachers in elementary schools. Their English is outstanding, but their lessons were formed without any knowledge of child psychology or childhood development, and I wondered if the children who study such lessons might not lose interest about English. Ok-Hee Do
It is also noteworthy that, regarding the KTEs' professional qualifications – or, rather, their shortcomings – two participants made specific comments about the KTEs’ inadequacies in English pronunciation. One respondent went so far as to state that teachers' regional dialect in Korean was a factor in their ability to teach English.

Teachers with inaccurate pronunciation in spoken English and fixed views about English education, especially teachers who speak with a coarse Kyungsangdo [the southeastern region of Korea] dialect, are obstacles to English education. Sung-Ran Kim

(Although Sung-Ran Kim was the only participant to formally mention in the study the influence of a teacher’s Korean dialect on the teaching of English, the topic was also discussed by non-participant teachers in informal meetings with the author. That is, some KTEs placed great emphasis on "native-like" pronunciation as a defining attribute of a good English teacher, and some of them (due to the geographical location in which the study was conducted, almost all of the teachers whom the author met spoke the Kyungsangdo dialect of Korean to varying degrees) also felt that their "provincial" dialect – as compared to the "Seoul" dialect, which is considered by many Koreans to be more sophisticated – was not helpful for their students' learning of spoken English, apparently believing that their "coarse" speech in Korean negatively affected their pronunciation of English, which in turn would be copied by their students.)

Related to the topic of shortage of qualified EFL teachers, discussions about the professional qualifications for KTEs will be presented in greater detail in the latter part of this chapter, in sections that specifically focus on teacher development.

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Summary

This major section of the chapter presented what the study participants thought and felt to be the less-than-successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools. The next section presents their suggestions for improving the curriculum.

Suggestions for Improving the EFL Curriculum

The teachers who participated in this study did more than point out the shortcomings of the current EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools; they also suggested ways to improve the curriculum. This section represents their voices. In other words, this section presents the study participants’ responses to the following research question: “What should be done to improve the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools?”

In addition, several points about the contents of this section should first be mentioned. First, it should be noted that the discussions about an educational curriculum are complex and multi-faceted, and thus separating the relevant issues into discrete categories is an inherent problem. For sake of organization, categorizations nevertheless had to be made, but it should be remembered that discussions about one issue often overlap with those about another. Also, because the main focus of this section is the curriculum itself, issues related to teachers will be discussed to the extent they are directly relevant to the curriculum, but issues that are essentially about teacher development will not be discussed here. Instead, such issues will be separately presented as the foci of the last three major sections of this chapter. Table 8 presents a frequency
count of the participants’ responses regarding the research question, “What should be done to improve the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools?”

Curricular Planning

Many teachers in the study offered suggestions for improving the current curricular policies or the policy-making process. The teachers’ suggestions may be classified as follows: establishing curricular policies that are consistent over a long-term period; having a real commitment towards establishing a functional, communication-oriented curriculum; instituting greater teacher involvement in the policy-making process; prioritizing the learners’ overall personal development; teaching EFL as an extracurricular activity; delaying the program until the upper grades; and canceling the EFL program. It should also be noted that, as was done in the discussions about the less-than-successful aspects of the EFL curriculum, for sake of categorical organization, the issues relating mainly to curricular planning/policy will be discussed in this section, and issues relating mainly to the curriculum’s syllabus will be discussed separately in a later section.

Establishing consistent, long-term policies. The problem of instability in educational leadership in Korea (for example, the frequent turnover in the post of minister of education) has already been discussed in this chapter. Related to this problem, five teachers in the study commented on the need to establish far-sighted educational policies. One of them, as seen below, suggested that long-term stability in the curriculum is attainable if people who make or influence educational policies could be guided by fundamentally sound educational principles
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Table 8: A frequency count of the participants’ suggestions for improving the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools (N = 54).

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A big reason why our country’s so-called “one-hundred-year” educational policies change so often is because of a lack of a philosophy. From individual teachers to the nation as a whole, there is no “educational philosophy.” . . . For instance, most of the new teachers as well as other teachers neglect to ask the question, “Why do I have to teach this?” and other such philosophical questions. . . . I really wish that our country, in which amateurs rule over professionals, would get its act together! . . . “Let's establish a philosophy!” That's my cry regarding the Korean educational system in general. Yoo-Na Lee

In addition to calling for sound educational principles, Yoo-Na Lee's outburst of “I really wish that our country, in which amateurs rule over professionals, would get its act together!” also reveals her view that the policy-making process in Korean education does not adequately include input from professional educators.

Although not stated as strongly as by Yoo-Na Lee, other KTEs nevertheless shared basically similar views regarding the need for a clear long-term vision regarding public education, a vision planned by governmental policy makers who are or have been professional educators.

Instead of making short-term plans, our education must strive to maintain a continuous, long-term plan for English education. The reality in our education is that because the general curriculum changes so frequently, the English curriculum keeps experiencing changes, too. Anyway, we have to be thoroughly aware that careful planning based on the wise judgement of policy makers will have important effects not only on English education but also on our country’s education in general. So-Young Shin

In addition, another one of the five teachers also mentioned the need to establish a curriculum that prioritizes the methodical establishment of a sound educational base in learners. This teacher was specifically concerned about the Korean tendency to prefer a
"get results fast at all costs" approach in curriculum planning. She worried that, though such an approach may indeed show some immediate results, if it does not provide learners with a strong basic foundation, the short-term gains are likely to come at the cost of sacrificing the learners’ potential for long-term development.

. . . This ["get results fast at all costs" mentality] is a problem that can be blamed on the Korean psyche, but what is needed is a curriculum that can be satisfied with a slow accumulation of learner progress based on a firm foundation. . . Sung-Ran Kim

In sum, the call for a far-sighted vision of the curriculum in which long-term gains are valued over short-term ones was a view shared by several teachers in the study. The next section describes a study participant’s desire for reforming the current EFL curriculum towards one that is genuinely communication-oriented.

A genuine commitment towards a communication-oriented curriculum.

From as early as 1995, when the MOE mandated the "Sixth National Curriculum," the EFL curriculum at all levels of public education was supposed to have emphasized the development of the students’ communicative ability, especially in listening and speaking. However, one of the participants in the study seemed to feel that the current classroom realities do not match the government’s announced goals.

It seems that in our education, rather than being connected to the English-speaking culture, the goal seems to be more towards memorizing and reciting the English language. Not only the teachers but the students, too – as they become exposed to the culture of English, they’ll become willing to learn about it on their own, and, instead of feeling burdened, they’ll be stimulated by curiosity, and they’ll initiate
their own learning. So, I think English education should be more than teachers transmitting English sentences to the students; instead, it is important to create situations in which sentences are used, and, by assigning communicative roles, have the students feel realistic experiences. . . . I believe that schools, rather than simply requiring from students the ability to learn grammatically correct sentences, pronunciation, vocabulary, et cetera—without contexts—they should foster adaptability, application, and positive attitude regarding English usage by exposing students to situations that require specific communicative functions. Ga-Young Lim

Thus, Ga-Young Lim appears to advocate the learning of English through a functional approach (e.g., Wilkins, 1976), in which the curriculum and teaching methods are based on providing learners with specific communicative situations that in turn include clear contexts and communicative purposes. In addition, her comments also indicate that, despite the government’s mandates for curricular reform in EFL education—mandates that de-emphasize teacher-centered rote-learning and instead stress student-centered contextualized communication—the actual teaching practices in the classrooms may be slow to change. Further, Ga-Young Lim seems to have concluded that genuine curricular changes should not be expected in the future unless the government first makes a genuine commitment towards the reforms, presumably by improving the conditions of EFL education, for instance, as mentioned in part by the teachers in this study.

The next section addresses another important topic regarding policy-making and the EFL curriculum; the section represents some of the study participants’ hopes of having greater input in policy making.

Instituting greater teacher involvement in policy-making. As was described earlier in this chapter, some of the study participants stated that the educational policies in Korea
are top-down, with insufficient inclusion of classroom teachers in the policy-making process. This section represents the voices of four of the study participants who hoped for a better future, in which they, the classroom teachers, would be allowed to have greater input in the policy-making process.

I fervently hope that many opinions of the classroom teachers will be reflected in the organization of the educational curriculum. Ok-Hee Do

Sentiments such as those expressed by Ok-Hee Do show that teachers want greater input in determining the direction of the curriculum. Furthermore, based on interactions with teachers during this study, it appears that the teachers' desire to exert greater influence on educational policies is not simply politically motivated. As discussed earlier in the chapter, a number of teachers in this study mentioned having negative feelings regarding their work – feelings including cynicism and frustration. These negative feelings appear to be due in significant part to the fact that the teachers feel under-valued as professionals. Thus, instituting greater teacher involvement in the discussions about policies that affect them would be beneficial on two levels. Fundamentally, in a democratic society, people have the basic right to determine their own destiny, whether as a nation or as individuals. Secondly, actively involving teachers in policy-making sends out a clear message that teachers are important and that their opinions are valued.

Prioritizing the learners' overall personal development. It is not an exaggeration to say that studying English has become a national obsession in Korea. Within such an environment, many teachers worry that an unhealthy amount of importance may be
placed on English education for children, whereby children may well learn English, but at the cost of losing sight of the more important things in life, things that may even differentiate humans from other living beings. One such teacher expressed her feelings in her survey response, as follows:

Following the flow of the times, for sake of a few words, the children learn English, which is distant in terms of feelings and culture from the children’s own, but . . . as an elementary-school teacher, . . . I want children to live and think learning to be emotionally considerate of others; I want them to feel joyous about things they can accomplish. Ok-Hee Do

In sum, Ok-Hee Do does not appear to be necessarily opposed to children learning English, per se. What she seems to desire is a school environment that offers the study of English within a well-balanced overall curriculum, one that places more importance on the children’s overall well-being than simply on their academic achievement.

Teaching EFL as an extra-curricular activity. Three teachers in the study suggested that if EFL education cannot be implemented at the primary-school level in a way that is fundamentally sound in terms of pedagogical effectiveness, that it be cancelled as one of the core subjects of the general curriculum and instead be offered as an extra-curricular activity.

I would like to be of help to you in your research, but I oppose the implementation of English education as a regular subject in the primary-school-level curriculum . . . In the Seventh National Curriculum, English education in elementary schools is reduced to one hour [one 40-minute class] per week. Studied like that, the effectiveness of learning English shrinks greatly, so it would be more appropriate to make the study of English into an in-school extra-curricular activity, offer it three
to four times per week, only to children who want to study it, and offer it for free.
Hae-Ja Kim

Regarding the limited teaching of EFL to primary-school-age learners, the position of “do it right or don’t do it at all” in a weak form—that is, canceling EFL as one of the core subjects of the general curriculum, but offering it as an extra-curricular activity—would probably be supported by many in the profession. For instance, regarding second/foreign language education at early ages under conditions of limited exposure to the target language, Lightbown and Spada (1999) argue an even stronger form: postponing language learning altogether until the learners are adolescents.

When the goal is basic communicative ability for all students in a school setting, and when it is assumed that the child’s native language will remain the primary language, it may be more efficient to begin second or foreign language teaching later. When learners receive only a few hours of instruction per week, learners who start later (for example, at age 10, 11, or 12) often catch up with those who began earlier... School programs should be based on realistic estimates of how long it takes to learn a second language. One or two hours a week will not produce very advanced second language speakers, no matter how young they were when they began. (p. 68)

Although the above recommendations by Lightbown and Spada are based on credible research, it is uncertain to what extent the MOE would follow their suggestions. This is because, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the makers of policies regarding EFL education in Korean public schools have so far shown that they are strongly influenced by public demand, whether or not the demands are based on sound research-
based evidence. Thus, the suggestion of offering EFL as an extra-curricular activity— as opposed to as a required course—in Korean elementary schools is worthy of serious consideration, because doing so would be a reasonable compromise between a public that wants early EFL education and a school system that cannot realistically offer it in a way that will result in significant long-term gains in student achievement. The next discussion presents a related topic: delaying the introduction of the EFL program until the upper grades.

**Delaying the introduction of the EFL program.** One of the study participants recommended that the study of EFL in Korean elementary schools should begin in later grades. Her suggestion for a later introduction was based on a consideration of the learners’ stage of maturity.

The English education currently being implemented from grade three ought to be instead begun in grade five. I think that third-graders are not sufficiently developed physically nor emotionally to learn English. Min-Jin Han

A subsequent talk with Min-Jin Han indicated that her opinion—that third-graders are too immature to learn a foreign language—was based on her belief that young children who learn a foreign language before their “first-language ego” becomes stabilized runs the risk of “subtractive,” as opposed to “additive,” development, cognitively as well as emotionally. In short, Min-Jin Han did not appear to be sufficiently knowledgeable about “additive” versus “subtractive” bi-lingual education (Widdowson, 1993) nor the positive
effects of L2 learning on the L1 learning of school-age children (e.g., Harley & Lapkin, 1984).

The next discussion presents the opinions of study participants who advocated the stronger form of the "do it right or don't do it at all" position regarding the implementation of the EFL program. In other words, several teachers in the study suggested the complete cancellation of the EFL program at the primary-school level.

**Canceling the EFL program.** Three participants in the study suggested that the EFL program in Korean elementary schools should be cancelled altogether. One teacher based her opinion on the belief that the current EFL program has not resulted in adequate "return on investment."

Compared to the "input" invested in English education for Korean elementary schools, the "output" is too small. Furthermore, the "output" is not a result of public "input," but that of private education paid for by individual families. The problem is to the extent that I personally regret paying taxes for elementary-school English education. If this system is the best that can be done, and the current results are all that can be expected, then it would be better if the English curriculum disappeared altogether from the elementary schools. Yong-Hee Kim

A similar but somewhat more specific rationale for canceling the EFL program at the primary-school level was given by another teacher who seemed to base her opinion on a pragmatic consideration of the limits of the current EFL program.

To have a proper English education program, what is needed is more reasonable and authentic content, teachers who can clearly educate, and enough study time to show some results. . . . If this is not possible, then it would be better to instead properly reform the direction of middle-school EFL education and give up on elementary-school English. Ji-Sun Roh
Ji-Sun Roh’s recommendation, for the reasons provided earlier in the “Teaching EFL as an extra-curricular activity” section, is likely to be supported by other professionals in the field of foreign/second language education (e.g., Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

Earlier in the chapter, a discussion was devoted to the study participants’ concerns regarding inter-grade transition. The next section presents their suggestions for improving the shortcomings in this area.

**Integrated Inter-Grade Transition**

It was pointed out earlier in the chapter that coherence within a curriculum and among curricula is an important characteristic of a sound educational system. Several teachers in the study suggested that the EFL curriculum at the primary-school level needed to be in better accord with the EFL curriculum at the secondary- and the post-secondary levels.

**Transition from elementary school to middle school and high school.** Regarding inter-grade coherence, five teachers in the study suggested that there should be better transition between the EFL curriculum in elementary school and those in middle school and high school.

The sixth graders who graduated in February 2001 are the students who began learning English from the third grade when English education was first introduced in 1997. According to the stories of many English teachers, these students speak English well, but their writing is a mess. There are many people who worry whether or not students who graduated under these conditions will be able to keep
up with the English curriculum in middle school, where speaking, listening, reading, and writing are integrated. To alleviate this problem, . . . a much closer connection between the elementary- and the middle-school curricula must be planned. Jung-Yun Sun

Such curricular “connection” as mentioned by Jung-Yun Sun is a part of what Johnson (1989b) calls “coherence,” whereby all of the various parts of an educational system are integrated to form a single harmonious whole. The next discussion focuses on the need to integrate the primary- and the secondary-level EFL curricula with post-secondary-level education.

A reformation of the college entrance examination system. In Korea, as in other countries where access to higher education is a key to social success, educational policies for the primary and secondary levels of education must be made in consideration of their implications for students’ access to the tertiary level. And, because students’ entrance to universities depends heavily on their scores on nationally administered college entrance examinations, it would not be much of an exaggeration to state that the national curriculum in Korean public education is ultimately centered around these examinations. Two teachers discussed this issue in the study.

The various problems related to English education in Korean elementary schools cannot be discussed independently. . . because all education in Korea ultimately returns to being centered around entering college. Min-Hae Kim

The term “college entrance examination” in Korea usually refers to the CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test), a national standardized examination administered once
annually in late autumn. The version of the examination given in the year 2001 was comprised of 220 questions in five subject areas ("language," "mathematics," "social studies," "science," and "foreign language," i.e., English). The amount of time scheduled for the test of the five sections themselves totaled 6 hours and 20 minutes. However, the test-takers were given periodic breaks, including a 50-minute lunch break, with the result that the total time the test-takers were required to be present at the test site was 8 hours and 50 minutes (from 8:10 AM to 5 PM). In addition to the five mandatory sections, there was one optional section, a "second foreign language" section. If a test-taker so chose, he/she made arrangements to take this 30-question section, which lasted for 40 minutes and increased the total testing time to 10 hours. The CSAT offered the following six foreign languages in this optional section: Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish (Korean Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation, 2001).

The above-mentioned CSAT’s English section consisted of 50 questions, and the actual test-taking time was 70 minutes. Although the MOE recognizes the potential benefits (for example, a positive “washback effect” (Hughes, 1989) to the curriculum) of including in the exam a test of the productive language skills (i.e., speaking and writing), due to logistical constraints, the exam currently does not directly test them. (The major logistical constraints include the following: a shortage of technical facilities to simultaneously record nation-wide the speaking samples of 300,000-plus students; a shortage of qualified personnel to evaluate the massive numbers of speaking and writing samples, even if the technical problems of audio-recording could be overcome; and the prohibitive costs required, even if the facilities and the personnel were available.) Instead
of directly testing speaking skills, the MOE claims that the CSAT tests the skills indirectly:

To evaluate one’s speaking skills, the person must be made to listen to another person, then made to respond orally. However, such a procedure is impossible on a large-scale national-level test. Thus, speaking skills are indirectly evaluated by having the test-takers listen to a taped recording, then filling in the most appropriate replies among the choices given on the OMR [machine-graded] answer sheets.

(Korean Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation, 2001, p. 2-3-3 [the page number is not a typographical mistake])

One of the teachers in the study, however, appeared to be dissatisfied with the MOE’s current method of testing English on the CSAT. The following comments specifically point to the negative effects of the current examination system on the students’ learning of English.

I’d say that about ninety percent of the people who have received English education [from middle school through college] in Korea are able to say almost nothing when they meet foreigners. The reason is because the college entrance exam-centered education has taken away the students’ opportunity to learn conversational English. . . . Even students who like and are good at English can’t relax and maximize their abilities because of the heavy burden called entrance to college. So-Young Shin

Many Korean educators are dissatisfied with the current examination system, but, to date, no one has suggested specific, realistic ways to overcome the aforementioned logistical constraints on testing the productive skills in English. (Unfortunately, So-Young Shin would not agree to an interview, so her ideas could not be further explored. Had she
agreed to an interview, she would have been asked to offer specific suggestions for reforming the college entrance system in general and the “English Ability” section of the CSAT in particular.

The issue of the “washback effect” in EFL education in the Korean context was generally foretold more than 35 years ago for the field of ELT (English language teaching) by West, who stated, “... it is the examination which ultimately determines what happens in the classroom, regardless of syllabus, textbook, teaching training, or anything else” (1964, p. 235). In short, all educational matters in Korea, not just those related to English education, should be considered in light of their implications for the college entrance examinations.

The next section presents the study participants’ suggestions for improving the syllabus of the EFL program in Korean elementary schools.

The Syllabus

Many teachers in the study offered suggestions for improving the syllabus for the EFL curriculum. Their suggestions have been classified as follows: increasing the amount of student exposure to English, integrating the four skill areas at all grade levels, integrating the use of English into a wider range of school activities, using “teacher-proof” content, and using authentic content. The first four of the issues are discussed in this section; the last one, using authentic content, will be discussed later, in the interview part of this major section of the chapter.
Increasing the amount of student exposure to English. As mentioned earlier, twelve teachers in the study felt that, according to the national curriculum for public elementary schools, the amount of time allocated to the study of English is too small. Thus, it was not surprising that ten teachers in the study suggested that the study time be increased.

The weekly study time should be increased, at least to the level of the Sixth National Curriculum, or about two hours per week. Bong-Shik Choi

Further, teachers also recommended that the in-school time for the study of English be increased in order to alleviate what many Koreans believe to be a serious social problem: excessive private studies. It appears that the MOE’s limited allocation of class time for the study of English, combined with unrealistically high curricular goals, has contributed to a widespread private study of English among the students. In a country known for intense academic competition, many parents feel forced to provide their children with private study of English to augment their studies in school, because the parents feel that the in-school study time by itself is simply not sufficient for their children to meet, let alone exceed, the high curricular standards. (This problem of unrealistic curricular goals will be further discussed in chapter five.)

The Seventh National Curriculum mandates that English be taught only in English in the third and fourth grades, while also reducing the study time to one hour [actually, one class period, which is 40 minutes] per week. The time for studying English is small; naturally, students have no choice but to rely on private out-of-school education. Sufficient amount of study time must be allocated. Mi-Ra Oh
In addition, because the in-school lessons are few and far between, another concern was that the students’ learning would not accumulate. Regarding this problem, one teacher offered the following alternatives to the current situation.

... Provide even a little bit of input [i.e., English] everyday; if not, redistribute the amount of study time so that the lessons have continuity, which would enable the effective study of English. Examples: (1) Through intra-school broadcasts [in English] every morning, supplement class-time activities. For example, story telling by a native-speaking teacher, models of role plays, etc. (2) Don’t teach English in the third and fourth grades; instead, allocate at least three to four hours of study time per week in the fifth and sixth grades. Yoo-Kyung Jun

Yoo-Kyung Jun’s first idea seems particularly promising, since regular morning broadcasts are already done in most Korean schools (currently, the broadcasts are usually brief announcements about school-related “news” such as upcoming school activities and so on), and they could be implemented relatively easily at very little additional cost, if the “input” were based on commercially sold audio-tapes instead of on live speech, which would involve considerably more complex planning and costs. Her second suggestion, to concentrate the study time in the upper grades instead of distributing it thinly over four grades, seems reasonable. However, given Korea’s current political climate regarding early English education, it does not seem likely that her suggestion will be followed by the MOE. A related, somewhat overlapping discussion regarding a wider use of English in school will be presented in further detail later in this section.
Integrating the four skill areas at all grade levels. Eight participants in the study suggested that, especially for the lower (i.e., third and fourth) grades, English should be studied in a more “holistic approach,” that is, in a way that integrates the four skill areas.

Instead of teaching only speaking and listening in the third and fourth grades, then gradually adding reading and writing in the fifth and sixth grades, the four skill areas must be integrated from the third grade. Rather than just having play- or game-based activities, other basics, including the alphabet (together with basic grammar), should also be simultaneously taught. Hae-Ja Kim

Such a perspective, that the four basic skill areas be learned and thus taught in an integrated way, reflects the view of the whole-language philosophy (e.g., Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991; Rigg, 1991).

Integrating the use of English into a wider range of school activities. Somewhat surprisingly, five teachers, including not only jun-dam teachers but also dam-im teachers, suggested that the use of English should be incorporated into other aspects of school work, as opposed to being only limited to the time English is formally studied.

... English study that occurs only in the “English Room” [a special classroom designated solely for the study of English] with only the English teacher seems to be meaningless. Of course, trusting the study of English to a capable specialist is a good expedient. But, when I now look at the kids in my class, I think to myself that, for English learning to be meaningful, it must be extended to their everyday lives, but the current curriculum is falling short of providing that. I have hardly ever seen my students use English outside of their classroom. Of course, since I myself don’t teach English, I think of English study as something completely unrelated to me, and the fact is that I never use English in any part of my in-class work. I think that at the primary-school level, English should be used not only while studying English but also for all other subject areas, with the dam-im teacher using English naturally. Then, the students would speak English naturally and with familiarity. When the
children realize that English is a part of all the aspects of school life, and only when such an environment is created, will the English curriculum become successfully established. Even if it is not explicitly taught, through the pervading school atmosphere, through day-to-day living, the important potential of English will accumulate, and if all of this is reflected in the formal English curriculum, then English education in primary schools will have some meaning. Yoo-Kyung Jung

Yoo-Kyung Jung’s drastic suggestion to incorporate the use of English into “all aspects of school life,” especially as a dam-im teacher (and there were other teachers who shared her views), is surprising, in view of the fact that in a nation-wide study conducted by the MOE, only approximately 7.5% (5,074 out of 67,464) of the surveyed primary- and secondary-level English teachers stated that, if required, they could teach English using English only (in H. N. Lee, 2001a). On the other hand, the idea of integrating English into subject areas other than English is not new in Korea. In fact, some private middle schools and high schools (e.g., the Korean MinJok Leadership Academy, an elite private high school in the Kangwon province) already conduct much of their schoolwork in English.

Other teachers in the study expressed support for the English-across-the-curriculum idea, with the exception of when the Korean language is formally studied.

Plan to use some English during the study of all subjects except for when we study the Korean language. Dong-Ook Park

A less surprising discovery was that similar sentiments – that is, arguing for a broader inclusion of English usage in school – were also expressed by jun-dam EFL teachers. One jun-dam had the following to say to her dam-im colleagues, who get a brief respite from teaching while their students are at the jun-dam’s “English” classroom:
As a jun-dam of English, there's something I want to say to dam-im teachers. Most dam-im teachers view the time for English lessons to be a way for them to teach less and for them to have some leisure time, and so they disregard the study of English. The result is that English is only studied during English lessons [in the jun-dam's separate “English” classroom], and when the students return to their homerooms, they don’t use any English at all. Ji-Sook Jung

Ji-Sook Jung’s message to her dam-im colleagues imply that the dam-im teachers should take a more active interest in integrating the use of English with the rest of the classroom work.

Another teacher, a dam-im teacher whose major in college was music education, suggested that, in addition to actively “using” English for regular school work, students should also be simply exposed as much as possible to English while at school.

. . . Gather stories and other materials that young children can be interested in and expose them to the material during times other than the time for studying English – for example, during self-study time or the time allocated for the study of elective subjects – and let the children absorb English. Young-Joo Ahn

Unfortunately, it was not possible to have a follow-up meeting with Young-Joo Ahn so her comments could not be further clarified. Presumably, her suggested “exposure” could come in various forms, for example, by the teachers reading stories to children, letting them listen to songs, watch videos, etc.

“Teacher-proof” content. Another very interesting suggestion for improving the current EFL syllabus was suggested by three teachers in the study, who indicated the need for “teacher-proof” content.
It would be good to have curricular content that could be easily approached by teachers who have little confidence in English conversation. Better than that would be to develop excellent teachers who can be sent to each school as jun-dam teachers of English. Myung-Hee Shin

Myung-Hee Shin, who is a dam-im teacher, seems to suggest that, ideally, English should be taught by specialists, but if that is not possible, then the expedient alternative is to create curricular content such that literally anyone could teach it, even those with little training in EFL education. On the face of it, the suggestion seems sound. However, such a view should be considered with caution, for the reasons stated below.

Attempts to create “teacher-proof” teaching content are not unique to Korea. In the United States, a movement to create a “teacher-proof curriculum” occurred during the 1960s and the 1970s (Good, 1996). Before long, however, the movement came under criticism, from educators who argued that teachers are not simply mechanical conduits who transmit information to their students. Instead, it was argued that teaching and learning are social constructions of knowledge — social, because knowledge is co-constructed by teachers and students through personal interactions (Good & Brophy, 1994). In short, according to the latter view, “teacher-proofing” in public education is nonsensical: As an essential component of the teaching and learning process, a “teacher-proof” curriculum is no more sensible than a “learner-proof” one. As a matter of fact, the next section represents the opinions of teachers who argue against “learner-proof” education; instead, they support teaching that is “learner-centered.” Further critique regarding “teacher-proof” education will be addressed in the next chapter.
Learner-Centered Teaching

In Korea, as in the United States and many other countries, teaching has traditionally been viewed as top-down transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learner, who was essentially viewed as a passive receptacle for the teacher-transmitted knowledge. This conception of teaching, however, is being gradually replaced – at least in theory if not in practice – in favor of the so-called “learner-centered” view, which sees teaching as a collaborative endeavor between the teacher and the learner. Thus, the learner is no longer seen as a passive receptacle but rather as an active negotiator of meaning, someone who also co-determines the means of attaining knowledge. As Tudor (1993) notes,

The recent interest in learner-centredness in language teaching, apparent in concepts such as learner autonomy, self-directed learning, or syllabus negotiation, revolves around a redefinition of the role students can play in their learning of a language. . . . Logically, however, student roles cannot be redefined without a parallel redefinition of teacher roles. (p. 271)

In the current study, four teachers pointed out that the teaching of EFL in Korean elementary schools also needed to become more learner-centered.

. . . because learner-centered education is something that depends on the very individually different study styles of learners as well as differences in the amount of effort put forth by learners, I think that learners should be introduced to various methods of studying English. . . . Rather than placing first priority on the [learners’] accumulation of knowledge, focus should be placed on methods of teaching English – especially teaching methods that suit the learners – and directing their interests [in English]. When all is said and done, the studying of English must give children choices. Yoo-Na Lee
In the field of foreign/second language education, the learner-centered view of teaching clearly prevails over the teacher-centered view (Brown, 1991). However, experts have also noted that teaching, whether it is teacher-centered or learner-centered, occurs within real constraints such as cultural attitudes and class size. As Tudor (1993) advises,

Learner-centred teaching is anything but an easy option. Learner-centredness is not a method, nor can it be reduced to a set of techniques. It involves a recognition of students’ potential to contribute meaningfully to the shaping of their learning programme, and then a willingness to accommodate this potential as far as the situation will realistically allow. (pp. 281 – 282)

In sum, few experts would disagree with Yoo-Na Lee’s suggestion for a more learner-centered teaching approach in EFL education in Korean elementary schools. However, it should also be remembered that attempts to actually implement teaching according to the approach must be considered in light of the constraints facing specific teaching/learning contexts. The next section presents the study participants’ ideas for improving the EFL textbooks currently being used in Korean elementary schools.

Textbooks

As stated earlier in discussions about the less-than-successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools, a number of teachers in the study expressed dissatisfaction with the main textbooks currently in use. In addition to the complaints, however, many teachers in the study also suggested ways to improve the textbooks. The suggestions the study participants made have been classified as follows: improving inter-
grade transition, having authentic content that is personally relevant to the students, lowering the difficulty level, and reducing the amount of content.

**Improving inter-grade transition.** It was stated earlier that, according to some teachers in the study, the curricula for the lower (i.e., third and fourth) grades and the upper (i.e., fifth and sixth) grades differ significantly in terms of their respective levels of difficulty. To remedy this problem, one teacher in the study suggested that the textbooks used in the four grades should be better integrated in terms of the level of difficulty.

The curricula for the fifth and sixth grades, in view of those for the third and fourth grades, are too difficult. . . . The organization of the textbooks must consider the difference in the stages between grades. So-Hee Kim

Thus, So-Hee Kim seems to suggest that the curriculum for each grade should be organized in a way that better integrates it with that of the other three grades, and, because the nationally used textbooks are to a significant extent the de facto curriculum for many EFL teachers, the textbook for each grade level should also be better integrated with those used in the other grades.

**Authentic content.** As mentioned earlier in the chapter, several teachers in the study stated that the linguistic content of the English textbooks currently in use in Korean elementary schools does not appear to be sufficiently authentic. Regarding this perceived problem, three teachers stated that the textbooks' content needed to be more authentic.
I wish that the textbooks for the primary level could be organized around very basic everyday English. What good is it for students to be able to memorize grammatically correct [linguistic] content if it is not authentic? Thus, it follows that, even if the content is brief, it would be proper for the texts to be organized based on content that is directly helpful for real communication. Un-Hee Park

Un-Hee Park implies that “authentic” linguistic content is that which is actually used for real, everyday communicative functions. Though somewhat broad, Un-Hee Park’s definition would likely be generally approved by other experts in foreign/second language education (e.g., Nunan, 1988b; Ramirez, 1995).

The study participants’ call for authentic content in the English textbooks is related to another previously discussed problem: according to one teacher, the textbooks lack content that is personally meaningful to the students.

The content [of the textbooks] must be student-centered, that is, related to the students’ lives, not just “classroom English.” The textbook by itself is inadequate in this regard. Jin-Mi Kim

Regarding goals for language learning, Nunan (1988) differentiates between “real-world objectives” and “pedagogic objectives.” According to Nunan, “A real-world objective describes a task which learners might wish to carry out outside the classroom, while a pedagogic objective is one which describes a task which the learner might be required to carry out inside the classroom” (p. 70). Even in Korea’s EFL setting, it would seem that the textbooks used for language learning should integrate real-world objectives and pedagogic objectives so that the learners can be helped to use, immediately or at a later time, what they have learned in class for “real-world” purposes, and vice versa.
Lowering the difficulty level. Concerning another topic related to the EFL textbooks used in Korean elementary schools, six teachers in the study suggested that the difficulty level of the textbooks is too high and thus should be lowered.

Another problem in the English curriculum in elementary school is that the curricula for grades five and six, compared to those of grades three and four, are too hard. Actually, from the perspective of students who face English for the first time in third grade, the [difficulty] level of the content in the third grade can be considered high, too. Just as a child who doesn’t know the Korean alphabet can’t be expected to read sentences, for students who haven’t learned the English alphabet, it will of course be hard for them to learn phrases, even if they are as easy as “Good morning.” So, it follows that for English education to become systematic, the difficulty level of the contents in the English textbooks used in the elementary schools must be lowered substantially. Jung-Yun Sun

Upon analysis of Jung-Yun Sun’s statement, especially in light of the national curriculum for EFL education, it can be seen that the issue is less about the difficulty level in the textbooks, per se, and more of a problem due to a mismatch between the curricular goals and the study time allocated to achieve the goals. Considering the fact that English is studied only once per week in grades three and four, and twice per week in grades five and six, for 40 minutes per session, it becomes clear that almost any textbook of substance (e.g., one that systematically addresses the integrated learning of the four basic language skills) would be too difficult for the learners.

The problem of mismatch between curricular goals and the curricular content will be discussed further in the next chapter. The issue of mismatch is also related to the next topic: several teachers in the study suggested that the amount of content in the textbooks should be reduced.
Reducing the amount of content. Four study participants mentioned that the EFL textbooks contain too much content and that the amount of material in them should be reduced.

The number of pages in the English textbooks should be reduced. I think there is too much material to study. Yong-Hee Kim

Similar to the case of the official textbooks' level of difficulty, the basic issue here does not appear to be about "the number of pages in the English textbooks," per se. Rather, the real problem appears to be due to a mismatch between the national goals for the EFL curriculum and the amount of time allocated to achieve the goals. Many English teachers feel compelled – by their superiors and the parents of the students – to cover their textbooks' contents from the beginning to the end. However, with at most two 40-minute class sessions per week to study English, many teachers find that the textbooks contain too much content. Thus, it was not surprising to find not only study participants who wanted to reduce the amount of study content, but also those who wanted to increase the amount of time allocated to the study of English.

In addition to suggestions for improving the official textbooks, some teachers in the study also offered suggestions regarding the use of supplementary resources. This issue will be discussed next.

Supplementary Teaching Materials

Though worded in various ways, eleven teachers in the study indicated that the main textbooks by themselves are inadequate for conducting the best possible lessons and
that, as a consequence, the ready availability of supplementary teaching materials is necessary.

When I attend lectures [e.g., during in-service training] conducted by teachers who have a lot of interest in English education and who do a lot of research about it, I have seen many instances of games and other activities that try to develop the students' four basic skills of English (listening, speaking, reading, writing) or their interest in English. Such activities can stimulate student interest, but there are times when the lessons are very different from the content of the textbooks. . . . The textbooks, by themselves, are not enough to develop the students' basic communicative ability while also fostering their interest and confidence, all of which is required by the national curriculum for the elementary schools. . . . Thus, various supplementary materials must be easily obtainable. Myung-Hee Shin

It should also be noted that much of the teaching material that is currently available in Korea consists of products imported from large publishing companies based in ESL countries such as the U.S. and England. Of course, such companies are well aware of the enormous EFL market, and they generally strive to produce materials that can be used in as many diverse settings as possible. For that very reason, little if any foreign-made teaching materials exist that are produced specifically for Korea. On the other hand, domestically produced materials do exist, but they are limited in variety and often inferior in quality. Thus, several teachers pointed out that supplementary teaching materials should not only be made more available to them, but also be more specifically tailored for Korea and Korean students.

I want a variety of teaching materials that are appropriate for the conditions of our country, and I want them (videos, tapes, books, etc.) to be less financially burdensome. Ok-Hee Do
Ok-Hee Do also points out that supplementary teaching materials can come in many forms. For example, audiotapes, videotapes, computer programs, board games, and foreign artifacts can augment the official textbooks in the study of English. In addition, the latter part of Ok-Hee Do’s comments also highlights another issue: Who should supply/pay for the supplementary teaching material. Not surprisingly, all of the teachers who addressed this issue stated that the government, as opposed to the teachers themselves, should take a greater financial responsibility in supplying the teachers with supplementary teaching materials.

There should be greater governmental support for the production and purchase of materials related to English study so that teachers won’t have to spend their own money. Joon-Hee Kim

In sum, to not only make classroom learning more interesting for its own sake but also to accommodate the various learning styles of the students, teachers should augment their use of the official textbooks with other teaching material. Towards these goals, some of the teachers in this study stated that the government should better assist the teachers in the procurement of such supplementary material. The next section discusses the study participants’ suggestions for improving the setting in which EFL learning occurs, i.e., the schools.

The Schools

It was stated earlier in the chapter that, according to some teachers in the study, several aspects of the Korean elementary schools are not conducive to the optimal
learning of English. Some of the teachers have suggested ways to improve the current
situation, and their suggestions have been grouped into two categories: the physical
setting of the EFL classrooms and supportive leadership, more specifically, supportive
school principals. The first of these issues is discussed below. The issue of supportive
school leadership will be discussed later, in the interview data part of this major section
of the chapter.

The physical setting of the EFL classroom. Citing Gaies (1980), Allwright and
Bailey state that “... the classroom is the crucible – the place where teachers and learners
come together and language learning, we hope, happens” (1991, p. 18). Although much
has been written about language learning in classrooms (e.g., Allwright & Bailey, 1991;
Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Chaudron, 1988; van Lier, 1988), to date, relatively little has
been written about the physical settings of language learning classrooms. In one of the
few discussions about the topic, Shamim (1996) explained the relationship between
various “zones” within Pakistani ESL classrooms and classroom interaction. In yet
another, Richard-Amato (1996) showed alternative room arrangements, including
“flexible work stations” and “flexible cluster work stations” (pp. 268 – 269). Four
participants in the current study discussed matters concerning the physical arrangement
of the EFL classrooms.

When various activities are conducted during English lessons, it’s inconvenient to
move desks and chairs. It would be convenient to have wide-open space in the
language lab. Joon-Hee Kim
In Korean elementary schools, one can find wide variations in the arrangements of the classrooms in which EFL is studied. Some rooms are "standard" Korean classrooms, which are partly characterized by straight rows of two-student desks facing forward towards the teacher and the chalkboard. Other rooms are more freely arranged, for example, where individual desks are arranged in small circular groups in an arrangement that Richard-Amato (1996) termed "flexible cluster work stations." Thus, while it is difficult to make general comments about the physical settings of the EFL classrooms in Korean elementary schools, one point that can be made is that the teachers want the freedom — freedom that should not be taken for granted in Korean schools — to flexibly arrange the physical settings of the classroom to suit the goals of specific lessons.

In discussions about schools and education, it should be remembered that public schools necessarily operate within a broader sociopolitical context. The next section is comprised of discussions that share one common theme: they all relate to calls for governmental reforms in public education.

**Governmental Reforms in Public Education**

This section addresses issues facing Korean public education in general — issues that transcend the EFL curriculum and its syllabi, and even the schools, per se. However, although the discussions may appear to go beyond the boundaries of EFL education, it should be remembered that the teachers' comments presented here are their responses to the following survey question: "What should be done to improve the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools?" In short, this section present the study participants' suggestions for governmental reforms in public education, but the suggestions are
nevertheless oriented within the focus of EFL education. The teachers' suggestions have been classified into the following three categories: regaining public trust in public education; reducing the teacher's administrative workload; and instituting a less central, more local management of schools.

Regaining public trust in public education. As discussed earlier, several teachers in the study stated that many Koreans no longer trusted public schools to adequately educate their children. Regarding this matter, two of the study participants felt that regaining the public's trust in public education should be an urgent goal for the Korean government.

... To take my class as an example, even though the children are achieving the curricular goals outlined for their grade [the third grade], the parents are not satisfied, and, by sending their kids to hagwons and so on, the children are taught reading/writing skills that they should be learning in the fifth or sixth grade. ... At this point, the Ministry of Education has acknowledged the essential role of out-of-school study, in hagwons and so on, in the children's education, so the parents' trust in public education to teach their children English has hit bottom. Not only for English education but for education in general, regaining the people's trust in public education is urgent. To do that, expanding school facilities, improving the quality of teachers, and educating parents should be top priorities. Mi-Jung Kim

First of all, in the above quote, it should be noted that the word "trust" is used alongside the idea of "parent satisfaction," or the lack thereof. This point about parent satisfaction and its implications will be further discussed within the broader context of socioeconomic competition in the "Significant Themes" section of the next chapter. In essence, Mi-Jung Kim's call for measures to regain the public's trust in public education is a call for comprehensive improvements in public education. The main areas in need of improvement, as noted by Mi-Jung Kim as well as others in the study, are the following:

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school facilities, teacher development, and communication among all the interest groups involved in public education.

In this study, the first of the three above-mentioned areas targeted for improvement, "school facilities," is interpreted to include things from classroom heating systems to audiovisual equipment. The latter two of the three above-mentioned areas designated for improvement – teacher development and inter-group communication – will be discussed in greater detail later in the study. The issue of teacher development will be the main focus of the latter part of this chapter. The topic of improving communication among people and organizations involved in public education will be discussed at length in the "Recommendations" section of the next chapter.

Reducing the teacher's administrative workload. Four study participants indicated that teachers could do better at teaching if they had more time to prepare lessons. In essence, their point is that too much of the teachers' time is diverted to doing work that is not directly related to teaching.

Currently, the school requires me to do too much paperwork that is unrelated to EFL teaching. Doing that kind of busywork leaves too little time for me to adequately prepare my lessons. I currently teach 22 hours a week. Compared to middle school or high school, teaching in elementary school is more fun, but the lesson preparations for elementary school is more time-consuming and difficult because, while the class work in middle and high school is very mechanical and "done by the book," the work in elementary school has to be " fresher," or the kids will lose interest and the class time will be terrible. [This teacher's comparison between primary and secondary levels is based on personal experience; prior to teaching at her elementary school, she had taught at a middle school and a high school.] I have conducted classes without being well prepared, and every time, the kids and I have a bad time, and I really don't like to be ill-prepared, but sometimes I have no choice. Jin-Mi Kim

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One of the reasons for this paper chase is accountability. In an effort to improve its accountability to the public, the MOE demands schools to produce “hard evidence” of student achievement, and the schools in turn demand the individual teachers to produce such evidence – in the form of formal reports, summaries of intra-school action research, etc. – that will be “sent up” to the MOE. Within the rigidly top-down structure of the Korean educational system, the teachers feel that they must do paperwork that is largely unnecessary because they have little power to question the orders of their principals. Likewise, the principals, who often sympathize with the plight of the teachers, have little power to question the mandates of the central government. Furthermore, the amount of administrative work that teachers are required to do appears to be increasing. In a recent survey of Korean elementary-school teachers, 67% of the respondents stated that the Seventh National Curriculum, which began to be phased in in 2000, requires more administrative work, compared to the national curriculums of the past (K. S. Park, 2001).

Instituting a less central, more local management of schools. As stated earlier in the chapter, the administration of public affairs in Korea has historically been very rigidly top-down. Against this trend, three of the teachers in the study stated that public education in Korea should follow a more flexible and locally determined form of school management, one that delegates more authority to localities and is more sensitive to local conditions.
... [The government should] guide the curriculum by reorganizing it to adjust its standards to meet the circumstances of individual localities. To do this, committees for reorganizing curricula by localities must be created... Bong-Shik Choi

Regarding local autonomy, however, it is also notable that, in a recent study (in K. S. Park, 2001), over 90% of elementary-school teachers opposed the Seventh National Curriculum, which, according to the MOE, grants more autonomy to local schools. One of the reasons for the opposition was increased workload for the teachers – 67% of the teachers in the study indicated that the new curriculum has resulted in more work for them (only 0.6% of the respondents stated that the new curriculum has resulted in less work). Greater local autonomy means greater local responsibility, which inevitably means more work for individual schools and teachers. Thus, there seems to be an inconsistency: Many teachers say they want more control over their schools and their work, but, at the same time, it appears that many of them do not want the additional work that inevitably comes with the added responsibilities of autonomy. This inconsistency is a dilemma that teachers will have to solve as individuals and as a political body.

The next section presents discussions in which the study participants looked inward at themselves as teachers. The following is a synthesis of their suggestions for ways to improve the quality of EFL teachers in Korean elementary schools.

Teachers

The study participants offered frank, sometimes heated, suggestions about ways to improve the quality of EFL teachers in the Korean primary schools. Although some of the categories somewhat overlap, this section presents the following issues: debate about
who should teach English – the jun-dam versus the dam-im teachers, open competition for teaching positions, the importance of a moral imperative and self-reflection, and placing native-speaking English teachers in schools. (Two issues – a further discussion of the jun-dam versus dam-im debate, and job security for “temporary” jun-dam English teachers – will be discussed in the interview part of this major section of the chapter.) It should also be noted that discussions focusing on teacher development programs will not be presented in this section. Instead, they will be presented in the latter part of this chapter, in three major sections specifically devoted to issues regarding teacher development.

**Who should teach English: the jun-dam versus the dam-im teachers.** The participants in the study were divided in their views on who should teach English in Korean elementary schools. On one hand, fourteen of the participants stated that the jun-dam teachers would be the better teachers of EFL.

. . . And, I think that English must be taught by jun-dam English teachers. In schools with a small student enrollment, English is still being taught by teachers who are not jun-dam teachers. I think this presents many problems. There are many instances of English being taught by people – teachers – who cannot use English at all. Mi-Ra Lim

In short, some teachers feel that dam-im teachers may be highly qualified as regular homeroom teachers, but they are not qualified to teach EFL if they cannot use English with some proficiency. It should also be noted that, at the primary-school level in Korea, “jun-dam” simply means “full-time”; thus, even jun-dam teachers may not necessarily be
experts in the subject matter they teach; they may simply be former dam-im teachers who are teaching English full-time.

Some teachers in the study wrote about the limits of what non-specialist teachers can be expected to do, even after receiving in-service training. The following quote is by a young dam-im teacher who majored in Korean language education at a university of education.

Even after in-service training, most dam-im teachers aren’t able to conduct English lessons (and most of them don’t want to). In 20 days during a school break, in 120 hours of short-term training, how much better can one’s pronunciation get? How familiar can English get for them? Instead of re-training teachers who haven’t used English in a long time, it’s better to have English taught only by full-time specialists who majored in English, and train them on a regular, on-going basis. Yoo-Kyung Jun

Teachers in the study pointed out yet another argument for having jun-dam EFL teachers: more focused, efficient instruction. In the following quote, one teacher compares the state of English education at her school before and after the recruitment of jun-dam teachers of English.

Regular teachers had a lot of difficulties [teaching English] because they didn’t have enough time to prepare lessons and they had too many subjects to teach, but things have been good since jun-dam English teachers have entered school because they can concentrate on just teaching English. Young-Joo Ahn

Thus, compared to dam-im teachers, who must prepare as many as twenty-plus lessons for up to ten academic subjects per week, jun-dam teachers of English only need to prepare a maximum of six (one each for grades three and four; two each for grades five
and six) lessons per week. In addition, for jun-dam teachers, because all the lessons are in
the same subject area (albeit for different grades), with substantial possibility of overlaps
in the content of the lessons, they can efficiently concentrate their teaching efforts. (In
addition to the above-mentioned reasons, there is another valid argument for having full­
time specialists – as opposed to homeroom teachers – teach English: the need for
language users to maintain a consistent personal identity. This issue will be presented
later, in the interview part of this major section of the chapter.)

In contrast to teachers who thought that English should be taught by jun-dam
teachers, three teachers in the study stated that English would be best taught by dam-im
teachers.

English lessons are most efficient when carried out by dam-im teachers – because
they understand the children’s emotions and their psyche. So-Hee Kim

In-service training needs to combine the study of psychological issues, English, and
teaching methodology, but sending teachers trained only in secondary-level
education into elementary schools is dangerous, because English is more than just a
study of linguistic forms... Young-Joo Ahn

The above comments reflect the thoughts of many teachers – mostly dam-im teachers
whose educational background is in primary-school education – who believe that English
proficiency is not the only, nor even the most important, criteria for a good EFL teacher
at the primary-school level. According to this view, to teach EFL to young children, a
teacher’s ability to cater to their emotional and psychological needs may be more
important than his/her ability to use the language.
Despite their disagreements, teachers on both sides of the jun-dam versus the dam-im debate do seem to share the view that English would be best taught by "professional" teachers of EFL, that is, teachers who are not only proficient in English but who also understand and can cater to the emotional and psychological needs of young children. Clearly, the teachers need to continue having dialogues towards finding solutions that will most benefit the students.

Open competition for teaching positions. As discussed above, one of the complex issues in Korean education centers around the fact that pre-service teachers are essentially destined to teach at either the primary level or the secondary level, depending on the tertiary-level school they attend. By Korean law, "universities of education" (gyo-yuk dae-hak) train teachers for the primary level, and "colleges of education" (sa-bum dae-hak) train teachers for the secondary level; crossovers rarely occur, and only with the government's formal permission. However, such crossovers did occur recently, between 1999 and 2001, when Korean elementary schools experienced a severe shortage of qualified teachers (including EFL teachers). The government's decision to allow prospective teachers who were trained for the secondary level to teach at the primary level was enthusiastically welcomed by these teachers-to-be, but the decision was vehemently opposed by many in-service and pre-service primary-school teachers.

Regarding the separate-track system of pre-service teacher education, three participants in this study suggested that the system be made more flexible permanently, as opposed to being a temporary stopgap measure. In short, they argued that the graduates...
of either type of educational institute should be allowed the freedom to pursue teaching careers at the primary-school level.

Whether one is educated at the English education department of a university of education or educated [at a college of education] to teach at the secondary-school level, it would be best to have an open policy, a free-competition, regarding job opportunities for anyone who has received training in elementary-school EFL education. Mi-Ra Oh

What is interesting to note in the above quote is that, although Mi-Ra Oh wants open competition for the teaching positions at the primary-school level, she is not necessarily suggesting a reciprocal arrangement for positions at the secondary level. This issue of open competition for teaching positions in Korean schools will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The importance of a moral imperative and self-reflection. Four teachers in the study indicated that, despite all the discussions about the various curriculum-related problems that require improvement, none is as important as the teachers’ honest self-reflections combined with doing the best they can under any given circumstances. The following is one teacher’s “confession” and a “call to duty”:

... to achieve the original goals of English education, many areas need to be fixed and revised. Reducing the number of students per class, reducing the teachers’ extra-curricular work, developing on-going in-service programs – of course, if everything could be improved, a better educational environment will be created, and better education will result. However, if things cannot be changed immediately, then I think the key to solving the problems is held by the teachers. This is a very basic and obvious thing to say, but the best course of action is for teachers to try their best under the given circumstances. Frankly speaking, in this regard, I wonder
how many teachers, including me, can confidently answer that they do try their best. . . . (I wonder if this kind of dilemma that I impose on myself isn’t just a way, a poor rationalization, for me to console myself and relieve my feelings of guilt towards the children when I get too lazy.) Sung-Hae Lee

The issue of teachers’ sense of a moral imperative and consequent self-reflection has been widely discussed in general education. For example, within critical theory, Giroux (1988) states, “It is important to stress that teachers must take active responsibility for raising serious questions about what they teach, how they are to teach, and what the larger goals are for which they are striving” (p. 126). Sung-Hae Lee showed deep insight and honesty when she stated that teachers must question themselves about their work within their classrooms, and, perhaps more importantly, face the moral imperative required of educators and all the ethical implications that unavoidably accompany the duties of a teacher.

Placing native-speaking English teachers in schools. Two teachers in the study stated that both students and Korean teachers would benefit by interacting with native-speakers of English at school on a regular basis. The teachers pointed out that native speakers would not only serve as teachers but also “real” conversation partners.

Recruit many native-speaking teachers, create an environment of real [communicative] situations, and allow the learners to approach English easily. Only in this way will the learners gain confidence and learn well. So-Young Shin

. . . . After the [in-service] programs are over, there are no opportunities for the teachers to use the conversational skills they learned during the program. Thus, such intensive programs are important, but it is also important to place native speakers [of English] in the schools so that opportunities can be made for the Korean teachers to have conversations with native speakers on an on-going basis.
Also, for the students, too, it is necessary to provide them with an opportunity to have contact with foreigners, even if for only one hour per week. Un-Kyung Min

Interestingly, although many participants talked heatedly about competition for jobs among Korean teachers of English, not one of the participants mentioned the so-called native-speaking teachers as a real or potential factor in job competition, let alone opposing the recruitment of native-speakers. As the above quotes suggest, it seems as if Koreans believe that native speakers of English, by the virtue of their command of English, have a rightful place in English education in Korea. Such an unquestioned belief might be seen by some as a manifestation of “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson, 1992).

The following section addresses another important issue mentioned by some of the participants in the study: the need for research that is specific to the Korean context.

Increasing Korea-Specific Research

It was mentioned earlier in the chapter that several teachers in the study lamented the fact that too much of the EFL curriculum for Korean elementary schools has been borrowed from ESL practices, without a critical examination of their appropriateness to the Korean context. Five of the study participants indicated that more research needs to be conducted about issues specifically related to EFL education in Korean elementary schools.

... First of all, the problems unique to the Korean EFL education setting must be identified. Then, based on actual on-site experiences, various proposals regarding appropriate teaching methods must be considered. ... The reality is that English education is becoming a national issue. So, it follows that Korean professionals in the field of EFL education must all the more quickly attempt to develop new
teaching methods that are appropriate for Korea. . . . it is dangerous to simply import and introduce yet other new methods and apply them in the classrooms without serious reflection and critical study of the methods. Min-Hae Kim

Clearly, ESL and EFL contexts have similarities as well as differences, and furthermore, no two ESL or EFL contexts are exactly alike. Thus, as Min-Hae Kim points out, to most effectively implement the teaching of English in Korean elementary school, TEFL-related issues specific to the Korean elementary schools must be researched in their own right.

Interview Data

The discussions in this section consist of themes based on interview data related to the study participants' suggestions for ways to improve the EFL curriculum of Korean elementary schools. The interview-based discussions presented here complement this major section's previous discussions, which were based on the study's survey data. The following four issues are discussed below: authentic syllabus content, school principals and leadership in schools, a further argument for jun-dam EFL teachers, and job security for "temporary" jun-dam English teachers.

**Authentic syllabus content.** Concerning the authenticity of the learning matter, one teacher complained that some of the current curricular content does not reflect real language use. This teacher wished that the inauthentic content would be screened out from the EFL syllabus.
Hyo-Ji Son: It would be nice if the curriculum contained more English from substantial communications in everyday life.

Don: Could you tell me more about what you mean? For instance, what do you mean by “substantial?” And what is the current problem that makes you say this?

Hyo-Ji Son: . . . As an example, you can find phrases like “I’m a boy” in the current syllabus, but such a phrase would almost never be said in an everyday conversation because the fact [that the speaker is a boy] would be obvious to both the speaker and the listener. It’s just one example, but expressions of this type exist. I hope that in the future, expressions like these will be compiled from the syllabus, then filtered out.

Hyo-Ji Son’s point about the unrealistic usage of “I’m a boy” is insightful. This study did not examine the actual linguistic content of the current EFL syllabus — for example, as reflected in the nationally used EFL textbooks — to confirm or disconfirm Hyo-Ji Son’s assertions; it was felt that such an analysis was beyond the scope of the study. That is not to say, however, that such an analysis would not be useful. On the contrary, a systematic analysis of the current EFL syllabus (for instance, as manifested in the school textbooks) to study the authenticity of the English contained therein would make a valuable contribution towards the progress of EFL education in Korea.

The school principals. Among all the personnel who actually work in a Korean elementary school, probably no one has more influence on the educational direction of the school than its principal. As such, the principal of a school can be a key factor in the school’s implementation of EFL education. Two of the study participants noted this.

The principal of the school is an important variable in EFL education in an elementary school. Han-Na Bae
Criticisms about weak leadership in the schools have been discussed earlier in the chapter. The current discussion presents one study participant’s thoughts regarding a school principal’s ideal role in EFL education.

Don: What would you like your principal’s role to be? That is, regarding English education at your school?

Jin-Mi Kim: The principal’s role in EFL education should be a supportive one, but he should be in the background. Even if he were interested in EFL education, he knows nothing about it. The principal at our school has supported the EFL program financially. He has never denied any of my requests when I asked for money to buy books and other teaching materials.

In sum, according to Jin-Mi Kim, an “ideal” principal is someone who actively supports—materially and otherwise—EFL education at his/her school. At the same time, because principals are usually non-specialists in the field of EFL education, an ideal principal is someone who delegates the actual planning and the implementation of the EFL program at the school to the school’s English teachers, especially if the teachers are jun-dams.

Another argument for jun-dam EFL teachers: personal identity. A previous discussion in this chapter listed several reasons for having full-time specialists—as opposed to homeroom teachers—teach English in Korean elementary schools. An interview with a study participant suggested yet another argument: the need for language users to maintain a consistent personal identity. The following conversation illustrates this point.

Jin-Mi Kim: . . . I ask all of my students to greet me by saying in English, “Hello, teacher!” and by waving [as opposed to bowing] to me when they see me,
wherever they are. At first, the students feel awkward about it, but, pretty soon, they get used to it, and we enjoy greeting each other that way. I think the students feel comfortable around me, and they enjoy greeting me.

Don: What makes you think that they enjoy greeting you?
Jin-Mi Kim: Well, by their smiles and laughter when they meet me, which is just what I want. . . . but several [dam-im] teachers have told me that being so friendly and familiar with the students is not a good idea.

Don: Why do they think that?
Jin-Mi Kim: Because they think it will break down the students’ moral conduct towards teachers, which in turn will make the students difficult to manage in class.
Don: So what do you think about what your colleagues said to you?
Jin-Mi Kim: Well, my initial reaction was anger, which I tried not to show. . . . Later on, I talked to those colleagues and tried to explain to them the reason for my insistence that my students greet me in a familiar way: because that’s how students greet teachers in English-speaking countries.

The above conversation reveals that it is not realistic to expect dam-im teachers to be “Korean” most of the time, then, during English lessons, abruptly undergo an “identity shift” and become teachers with “foreign” characteristics, then, once a lesson is over, again abruptly return to their “Korean” identities. Most Korean teachers expect rigid deference and strict obedience from their students, as shown by, for example, the way the teachers greet their students and how the students greet them – by mutual bowing, with the students bowing and speaking more deferentially. In contrast, KTEs who not only teach about the behavioral aspects of communication in English but also practice it can greet their students by hand waving, and the students can do the same. When the dam-im teachers teach English, both the teachers and their students sense the need to undergo the above-mentioned “identity shift,” which is very awkward, stressful even, for both the teachers and the students. On the other hand, with jun-dam teachers, awkwardness may be avoided because neither the jun-dam teachers nor their students need to undergo an
“identity shift”; in interactions between each other, if they so choose, both the teachers and the students can have “English-appropriate” characteristics all the time.

Jin-Mi Kim understands that English is more than words; she knows that language is embedded in culture, and that culture is manifested in language. Unlike dam-im teachers, jun-dam teachers do not need to shift identities to fit the subject to be taught. This is not to say that jun-dam teachers should assume a false self-identity for the sake of their teaching roles. Jin-Mi Kim believes that her students should be exposed as much as possible to English within a real cultural context, and her belief manifests itself in her identity as an English teacher, Korean or not. For her, when it comes to being a teacher of English, there are no momentary shifts in self-identity: To the best of her ability, she teaches English the way she believes it should be learned, which is within a real cultural context, with genuine, culturally-appropriate interactions among the communicators. In sum, this interview with Jin-Mi Kim has led to another insight relating to the jun-dam versus the dam-im debate.

Job security for “temporary” jun-dam English teachers. In Korean public elementary schools, the jun-dam teachers of English may be classified into two types, “regular” and “temporary.” Regular jun-dam teachers, like dam-im teachers, are almost without exception graduates of a university of education, and, as tenured government employees, these teachers have work-related benefits such as job security, health insurance, a pension plan, etc. In contrast, to date, many of the elementary-school jun-dam teachers of English who are not graduates of a university of education are hired on a short-term basis, with little if any benefits. The temporary status of these positions can be
viewed as the government’s attempt at a compromised solution, to quickly fill many EFL teaching positions at the primary-school level, while appeasing the in- and pre-service teachers of primary schools who strongly oppose the recruitment of ‘outsiders.’ In effect, the government sent the message, ‘Newly recruited teachers who are not graduates of a university of education are expendable.’ Understandably, however, temporary teachers want permanent positions with benefits and job security, in other words, the same working conditions as those of regular teachers. Two participants spoke about this.

Don: What could the government do to help you, an English teacher?
Han-Na Bae: I want job security.
Don: Can you say a little more about that?
Han-Na Bae: As a [temporary] jun-dam, I’m hired on a semester to semester basis. As a temporary teacher, I have no benefits. For example, I have no health insurance.
Don: How will having job security help you as a teacher?
Han-Na Bae: [Trying to control her irritation that bordered on anger] Are you asking because you really don’t know?
Don: I’m sorry. I just wanted to hear your opinion.

(For Han-Na Bae, the relationship between job security and quality of teaching was so obvious as to be unworthy of discussion, and, sensing her irritation, the line of questioning was not pursued further in the interview.)

Another notable point about job security for temporary jun-dam English teachers is that, despite strong opposition from those with vested interests in universities of education, and contrary to the government’s earlier announcements, temporary teachers can in some cases become regular teachers, if the following two conditions are met.
First, temporary teachers, on their own time and at their personal expense, must receive additional training at a university of education and pass a teacher certification examination.

Don: Are you a regular - not temporary - teacher at your school?
Mi-Ra Oh: From September 1999 to August 2000, while I was working at Suh-Ryung Elementary School as a contracted [i.e., temporary] full-time English teacher, I received additional training, took a teacher certification examination in August 2000, and thereafter became a regular teacher. I received 1,008 hours of training at the university of education nearest my home, and it cost me two million won [approximately 1,500 U.S. dollars, which is equal to about twice the amount of this teacher’s basic monthly pay]. . . . Anyway, I learned the gist things; I learned in one year and three months what the students at universities of education learn in four years. I worked during the day and commuted to the university, and I’d get home at midnight. . . . Some teachers who started the process dropped out, for various reasons, including health reasons.

As difficult as the process may be, receiving training and passing the teacher certification examination does not guarantee that “non-regular” applicants [i.e., those who are not graduates of a university of education] can become regular teachers. In addition to the above-mentioned process, the primary school to which a “non-regular” applicant is assigned must be willing to accept her/him as a regular teacher. Thus, “non-regular” applicants, including temporary teachers, have little real power to obtain a regular teacher status; such decisions are made unilaterally and at times seemingly arbitrarily by the schools to which they are assigned, and the teacher only has the choice of either accepting the offer, refusing it, or, in rare cases, seeking legal judgement by filing a law suit. The following statement by Mi-Ra Oh is from a subsequent part of the above interview.
Mi-Ra Oh: . . . Among the people who received [teacher certification] training with our group, there was a man who wanted to become a phys-ed teacher. He was working for a large construction company at the time. He passed the teacher certification exam and subsequently received an official notification assigning him to a school, and so he quit his job. But, even though he safely passed all the requirements for certification, the school he was assigned to refused to take him as a regular teacher because he was a graduate of a two-year college. He sought legal recourse. Apparently, the wording of the eligibility requirements for prospective teachers are ambiguous. . . . After coming to my elementary school and getting to know the system, I found teachers from various backgrounds: older teachers who are high-school graduates, teachers with university backgrounds in secondary-education, teachers with two-year degrees from correspondence school. . . .

In short, temporary EFL teachers, like most other groups of people without collective power, have little political influence to affect their own future. Nevertheless, the consensus among the temporary jun-dam teachers who talked about job security in this study was that they should have, and are entitled to, job security that is equal in status to that of regular teachers.

Summary

This major section of the chapter, devoted to issues related primarily to the study participants' suggestions for ways to improve the EFL curriculum in Korean elementary schools, was the third and last segment of the discussions focusing on the EFL curriculum. However, a discussion about an educational curriculum – i.e., the “what” and “how” issues – would be incomplete without the inclusion of issues related to teachers – i.e., the “by whom” questions. Thus, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to discussions relating to teachers, more specifically, teacher development.
Successful Aspects of EFL Teacher Development

The next three major sections of the chapter respectively focus on the following three questions regarding teacher development for EFL education in Korean elementary schools.

1. What have been the successful aspects of professional development for KTEs in public elementary schools?
2. What have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects of professional development for KTEs in public elementary schools?
3. What should be done to improve the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in public elementary schools?

In analyzing the study data, it was useful to organize the discussions according to the following categorization (Figure 2). Organizing the teachers' responses according to the 2 X 3 (personal/professional; pre-service/in-service/comprehensive) categories was at times difficult and inevitably somewhat arbitrary, because the complex, often overlapping, nature of the discussed issues did not permit neat categorization. Categorizing the discussions into “pre-service,” “in-service,” and “comprehensive” (i.e., pre- and in-service combined) development was relatively easy, but it was much more difficult to classify the data according to the “personal” and the “professional” parts of the categorization because these latter two areas are so closely intertwined. Despite these difficulties, however, the categorization served two useful purposes. One, it enabled a systematic organization of the study’s data. Two, and much more importantly, it
highlights the need to direct attention to not only the technical but also the humanistic aspects of teacher development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal</th>
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<th>Personal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Service</td>
<td>In-Service</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Service</td>
<td>In-Service</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 2: A categorization of teacher development.

One more point should be made before the data regarding teacher development is presented. As stated above, the remaining three major sections in this chapter will be organized according to the aforementioned 2 X 3 categorization consisting of six parts. However, not all six categories are included in each of the three sections. The reason for this is simple: If the theme of a discussion fits a category in a section, then the category will of course be presented; on the other hand, if a category cannot be represented by research data, then there is no rationale for including the category in the section.

The rest of this major section is devoted to the study participants’ responses regarding the successful aspects of teacher development for EFL education in Korean elementary schools. In other words, the section presents the study participants’ responses to the following research question: “Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the successful...
aspects? To what factors can the success be attributed?” Table 9, shown below, presents a frequency count of the participants’ responses related to the research question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development: In-Service</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development: Comprehensive</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development: In-Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A source of information and resources</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in the trainee’s English proficiency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse types of in-service opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development: Comprehensive</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: A frequency count of the participants’ responses regarding the successful aspects of EFL teacher development for Korean public elementary schools (N = 54).

**Personal Development: In-Service**

According to two teachers in the study, the in-service programs serve as occasions for teachers to come together on not only a technical level but also on a human level, to comfort, support, and uplift each other. These programs provide opportunities for them to connect or reconnect with others who share their plight so that they can help each other recharge their energy for their work.

The in-service was good because I got to meet teachers like Min-Jae Park. Prior to coming to the in-service, my hopes for the prospects of English education in Korean elementary schools had been dimming. Sometimes I thought about folding up all hope, and sometimes I thought that I shouldn’t, because I’ve seen many people who worry about English education, but prior to meeting Mr. Park, I had never seen anyone who actually tried to tackle the problems. Because of teachers...
like him, who shows sincere concern for English education, I believe that our educational system will get back on its feet again. Ok-Hee Do

Several Korean EFL teachers unrelated to this study have also told the author that, as teachers of EFL, they often felt isolated and alone, with no visible support from other teachers. Affective issues in teacher development – which are clearly connected to such issues as teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition – have been much discussed in general education (e.g., Gold, 1996). Furthermore, in the field of foreign/second language education, affective issues relating to the language learners have also received a substantial amount of attention. However, in discussions to date about the development of language teachers, the affective concerns about them as human beings have been largely neglected. Ok-Hee Do’s comments serve as a reminder that caring about the humanistic aspects of developing language teachers may be just as important, if not even more so, than being concerned about the technical aspects of teacher development.

Personal Development: Comprehensive

One participant, who otherwise had a generally negative opinion about English education in Korean public schools, noted that learning to teach English provided her with an opportunity for not only professional but also personal growth that transcended pre- and in-service training.

By learning to teach English and thereby learning English as well as things related to English, teachers are able to broaden their world vision, which otherwise could easily become narrow. Also, the training related to English education provides an opportunity [for the trainees] to self-reflect and grow. Ga-Young Lim
Thus, Ga-Young Lim seems to realize that, not only for her students but also for herself, being exposed to a foreign language— that is, learning and teaching English— results in positive personal development.

**Professional Development: In-Service**

Many teachers in the study applauded the in-service programs for helping them improve as English teachers. The programs have been beneficial in several ways, as noted in part by one of the teachers.

The re-training of English teachers is a very good thing, to be able to receive new input, get away from the old rigid teaching methods, learn about the trends in the English of the current times, exchange information with other teachers, and meet other teachers. Ok-Hee Do

The following presents more detailed discussions by the study participants about the successful aspects of in-service training of elementary-school KTEs. The discussions have been organized around three themes: a source of information and resources, improvement in the trainees' English proficiency, and diverse types of in-service opportunities. The first two issues are presented below, and the last one— diverse types of in-service opportunities— will be presented later, in the interview data part of this major section.

**A source of information and resources.** Through the in-service programs, teachers have opportunities to obtain or exchange information, not only with the programs'
lecturers but also among each other. Three of the study participants commented on this point.

Through in-service teacher development programs, various materials, teaching methods, and experiences can be obtained. Ji-Sook Jung

I like the in-service programs because knowledge about producing teaching materials and so on can be shared cooperatively. Hyo-Ji Son

Thus, it seems that for the EFL teachers in Korean elementary schools, in-service programs also serve as de facto professional conferences. In Korean in-service programs, knowledge and information is typically thought to formally flow in a top-down direction, from the lecturers to the participating audience. However, as Hyo-Ji Son pointed out above, there can also be sharing of knowledge and information in a two-way horizontal direction, i.e., among the participating teachers, both formally (e.g., in mock teaching sessions) as well as informally (e.g., over tea during breaks).

**Improvement in English proficiency.** One teacher in the study stated that his English proficiency improved as a result of participating in the in-service programs.

The in-service programs for English teachers became an opportunity to improve my ability to communicate in English. . . . I was able to receive a lot of corrections on my pronunciation, and my listening skills seem to have improved. Dong-Ook Park

It is notable that, although Dong-Ook Park was the only study participant to state that the in-service programs seem to have helped him improve his conversational skills in English,
at the same time, not one of the study participants said that the programs did not help them improve their conversational skills.

In a typical summer/winter break in-service program for teachers of EFL in Korean elementary schools, the attendees study and practice "English conversation" for approximately 80 hours over a period of four weeks. Thus, some improvement in their oral/aural communicative skills is to be expected. On the other hand, several of the teachers in the study stated that the improvements in the English skills that they may have made as a result participating in the in-service program(s) are difficult to sustain, because there are few opportunities for on-going study and practice. This problem will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

Professional Development: Comprehensive

Two teachers in the study mentioned that a noteworthy positive aspect of teacher development has been the efforts of the EFL teachers themselves.

The process for developing English teachers for Korean elementary schools is mediocre, but the efforts exerted by the English teachers themselves are tremendous; it seems to me that they study and do research by themselves [despite shortcomings in organized assistance]. Yong-Hee Kim

Comments such as those made by Yong-Hee Kim are noteworthy because they indicate that there may be many Korean teachers who are willing to make personal sacrifices for the sake of their students. Further, it also appears that, given better guidance and more of the necessary resources during the pre- and in-service stages of their careers, the KTEs could do even more for their students than they are able to do now.
Interview Data

Interviews with study participants subsequent to the collection and analysis of the survey data led to the emergence of the following theme regarding a positive aspect of inservice teacher development programs for EFL teachers in Korean elementary schools. The discussion focuses on diverse types of training opportunities.

Diverse types of in-service opportunities. The majority of the study participants who discussed matters relating to opportunities and diversity in in-service programs for EFL education had generally negative opinions. Notably, however, one participant stated that there have been diverse in-service opportunities. In the following passage, the teacher’s initial statement is a part of her written response to the survey question, “Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the successful aspects? To what factors can the success be attributed?” The subsequent part of the exchange consists of excerpts from follow-up conversations via email between the teacher and interviewer.

So-Hee Kim: . . . There have been diverse opportunities for English-related in-service programs: basic, advanced, special-activity training, overseas training, training camp, et cetera.

Don: . . . You said, “et cetera.” Were there any other types of training other than the five types you have mentioned?

So-Hee Kim: . . . There have been two more. One, an optional English conversation program – for thirty hours, organized by the Education Training Center [a government institute that oversees all in-service training of public-school teachers within its administrative district]. Native-speaking lecturers of English – currently there are four – working at the Center conduct the training in July, when there are no other schedule conflicts for the Korean
teachers, and the participating teachers each pay about a 40,000 to 50,000 won [approximately 30 to 40 U.S. dollars] training fee. Two, there was an optional English conversation program – for fifteen hours, organized by the Regional Educational Office. One native-speaking instructor working for this office would visit schools – for each school, three hours per day, for five days. This was to save travel time for the Korean teachers to go to and from training centers and to give many teachers opportunities to have conversations in English, but this program will be discontinued from this year [2001].

Don: Do you know why the latter program will be discontinued?

So-Hee Kim: I'm not sure, but probably for financial reasons.

Don: Some teachers may disagree with you about your statement that “there have been diverse opportunities for English-related in-service programs.” Would you like to clarify what you mean about the opportunities for the first five types of training you mentioned?

So-Hee Kim: The people who disagree with my view probably mean that these programs lack continuity. . . . As you can see from the following explanation, the forms of training are diverse, but the training that people can actually participate in are limited to the basic, the advanced, and the [above-mentioned] optional English conversation programs. Even though these programs provide the motivation to study English, since continuous opportunities are not provided [beyond the above-mentioned three types], depending on one’s perspective, couldn’t it be said that the opportunities for training are few? The five types of training are . . . (1) General training (120 hours): The first stage of the teacher training during summer/winter breaks; it is currently being conducted. (2) Advanced training (120 hours): The second stage of the teacher training during summer/winter breaks; it is currently being conducted. (3) Special-activity training (120 hours): Before English education was added to the general elementary-school curriculum, when English was an extra-curricular “special activity,” a small number of teachers received training, but this program has been discontinued. This program could be called the first in-service teacher training program for English education [at the primary-school level]. (4) Overseas training: Between 1996 and 1997, funded by the Municipal Education Office, about 100 local teachers received training in England, Canada, Hawaii, and other places abroad. But this program was stopped in November of 1997 after the IMF crisis [a severe economic crisis in Korea during which time the nation borrowed a large sum of money from the International Monetary Fund]. To my knowledge, this program is currently being re-offered to a few teachers in our city. To have the opportunity to receive this training, teachers must have excellent ability in English, as shown on a test. (5) Training camp (90 hours): This program is offered at the Education Training Center during winter breaks. For two weeks, the trainee teachers live together with native-speaking instructors, and those
who choose to participate in this program generally tend to be confident about their English ability [even before participating in the training].

In sum, the in-service opportunities could be said to have been diverse, because various types of programs have been conducted over the years. However, several types of programs mentioned above have been or will soon be discontinued. Also, some of the existing programs are very small in scale, making them virtually inaccessible to the majority of teachers. Thus, whether or not there have been diverse training opportunities depends on one’s view. The problem of lack of continuity in in-service programs will be further discussed later in the chapter.

Summary

In sum, the study participants mentioned many positive areas of personal and professional development as a result of experiences in EFL teacher training. The next section presents the study participants’ responses regarding the less-than-successful aspects of EFL teacher development for Korean elementary schools.

Less-than-Successful Aspects of EFL Teacher Development

When asked about ways to improve the quality of English education in public Korean elementary schools, many teachers in the study stated that improving the development of teachers is one of the keys. Several teachers stated that the inadequate training of teachers prior to the implementation of the EFL curriculum was and is one of the main sources of difficulties in the EFL education in Korean elementary schools.
English education in Korean elementary schools started without the basic training of teachers. This resulted in numerous mistakes in the implementation of the curriculum, and I think that more than anything else, the development of pre-service and in-service teachers is a very important problem. Jin-Un Lee

This section presents the study participants' responses regarding the less-than-successful aspects of EFL teacher development for Korean elementary schools. In other words, this section presents the study participants' responses to the following research question:

"Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?" Table 10 presents a summary of the study participant's responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development: Pre-Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficiently specialized curriculum for EFL teachers-to-be</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of integration between theory and practice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development: In-Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of on-going training</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-learner-centered programs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of intra- and inter-program coordination</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient amount of training time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of integration between theory and practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No negative aspects</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: A frequency count of the participants' responses regarding the less-than-successful aspects of EFL teacher development for Korean public elementary schools (N = 54).
Professional Development: Pre-Service

Pre-service training for the KTEs can refer to English education departments at universities of education or colleges of education, or English language and literature departments at universities of education. However, because the overwhelming majority of primary-school teachers in Korea are educated at universities of education, unless stated otherwise, general references to pre-service training denote universities of education.

The teachers in the study mentioned the following two problematic areas regarding pre-service training programs for primary-school-level EFL teachers in Korea: the programs are insufficiently specialized for training EFL teachers, and the programs lack the integration of theory and practice. The two issues are discussed below.

Insufficiently specialized curriculum for EFL teachers-to-be. Four teachers in the study mentioned that universities of education have generally inadequate programs for developing specialists, not only in teaching English but also in all subject areas taught in elementary schools. The following passage illustrates this point (and one more quote will be presented later, in the interview part of this section):

When I was a student at the university of education, there were student demonstrations about whether secondary-school-level teachers should be allowed to work as jun-dam teachers at the primary-school level, and I have a lot to say to the people who called the conflict a fight for vested interests. I remember that the general consensus among the people involved was that the biggest problem was not the secondary-level teachers who majored in English, nor the primary-level teachers who work hard in the front lines, but the basic curriculum at the universities of education. It's regrettable to think that if the English education departments at the universities of education, the institutions for training primary-school teachers, had put forth more effort towards the professional development of
English teachers, everyone may have been satisfied. And I think that this problem is the same for other subject areas, too—not just for English. Soo-Jin Kim

Another teacher in the study added further insight about the lack of specialized training for primary-school EFL teachers.

Universities of education have solid [teacher preparation] programs for education at the primary-school level, but weak TEFL programs; Colleges of education [which prepare middle- and high-school teachers in specific subject areas, including EFL education] have so-so English [i.e., TEFL] programs, but no programs for primary-school-level education. In-Ja Oh

Thus, it appears that, at least for now, neither the universities of education nor the colleges of education are adequately training English teachers-to-be who are simultaneously expert in both TEFL and primary-school education.

In short, regardless of area of specialization, the curriculum for the various departments/programs at universities of education in Korea are in reality designed to prepare pre-service teachers to become, as the saying goes, “a jack of all trades, but a master of none.” For the preparation of regular dam-im teachers, who may be required to teach up to ten subject areas, such general preparation is logical and necessary. However, such a general program is not the most effective method for developing jun-dam teachers, in other words, specialists, who, by definition, specialize in a particular subject area. This issue of specialized preparation will be further discussed later in this chapter as well as in the next chapter.
Lack of integration between theory and practice. One study participant stated that the contents of the TEFL-related courses she studied in college were excessively theory-based, with little connection to classroom situations. As a result, she felt that the courses have not been of much help in her current teaching.

To be honest, the English education-related courses that I took in college were only for a few credits, and the lectures were too theoretical, so, in view of their [lack of] connection to lessons to be taught in the classrooms, the courses were meaningless. Yoo-Kyung Jung

This lack of integration between theory and practice is clearly problematic for teacher development. As Clarke points out regarding the theory/practice distinction, "The principle problem is the dichotomy itself... it is absurd to talk of theory apart from practice and vice versa..." (1994, p. 12). More about the theory/practice distinction/integration will be discussed later in this chapter and in the next chapter. The next section discusses issues related to weaknesses in the KTEs' professional development in in-service training.

Professional Development: In-Service

Regarding professional development, the teachers in the study noted the following five areas of weakness in the in-service programs: a lack of on-going training, non-learner-centered programs, a lack of intra- and inter-program coordination, insufficient amount of training time, and a lack of integration between theory and practice. The first three areas are discussed next, and the last two areas will be discussed later, in the
interview part of the section. On the other hand, two participants stated that there were no negative aspects with regards to the in-service training programs.

Lack of on-going training. One teacher in the study stated that the in-service programs in Korea for the development of primary-school-level EFL teachers lack continuity.

Even for teachers who are interested in teaching English, the training programs have been lacking in providing the teachers with continuous opportunities. There is a shortage of continuous opportunities in training for the development of English proficiency. So-Hee Kim

As stated earlier, there are virtually no in-service training opportunities for primary-school-level EFL teachers in Korea beyond the “basic” and the “advanced” programs. This is the main reason why some teachers in the study expressed their concern that whatever gains — for example, in English communicative ability — they may make through the in-service programs will be lost in the absence of on-going training opportunities.

In rare instances, teachers choose to retake either of the programs — usually the “advanced” one — at their personal expense. Such instances are rare because most teachers do not see a sufficient trade-off benefit of attending, at their own expense and during their summer/winter vacation time, a program that is essentially no different than the one(s) they have already attended. Instead, if they choose to study at all, they are more likely to attend private language institutes. Not surprisingly, some of the teachers in the study stated that, in the absence of on-going government organized in-service
programs, they would like the government to financially subsidize their private, professionally related studies. More about this issue will be discussed later in the chapter.

**Non-learner-centered programs.** According to two of the study participants, the in-service programs are not sufficiently catered to the needs of the classroom teachers. In essence, they complained that many of the courses in the in-service programs were taught by lecturers who had little first-hand knowledge of the realities of actual elementary-school classrooms. Naturally, the teachers wished that the courses in the in-service programs would be taught by individuals who have a clear understanding of real classroom situations.

Because it's called the advanced-level in-service program, I came [to the program] with a lot of expectations. But, when you look at the content of the professors' lectures, in a word, it looks as if they have absolutely no knowledge about even the basics of elementary-school English. Because the lectures are conducted by people who have never observed how English lessons proceed in elementary school, there are limits to how the lectures, which have no realism at all, are received. I wish the professors would prepare the lectures with more sincere effort. Un-Hee Park

In a discussion about teacher development, Nunan (1989) contrasts a top-down approach with a “client-centred” approach. According to Nunan, the former type “[is] designed by ‘experts’ and delivered as a package to the teacher... Top-down methods... assume that there is one best way of learning a second or foreign language, and they all provide a set of principles and procedures, which must be more or less faithfully followed by the classroom practitioner” (p. 129). In contrast, the latter type develops “the content and methodology of language programmes through a process of consultation and negotiation.
with learners. Such learner-centred programmes attempt to incorporate into the classroom information by and from the learners themselves” (pp. 129 – 130; see also Nunan, 1988a).

Un-Hee Park’s complaint illustrates well the “top-down” approach, which, as she points out, results in unsatisfactory in-service programs.

Lack of intra- and inter-program coordination. Two participants in the study believed that the in-service programs lacked coordination, as evidenced by the training content.

In the training, there are a lot of overlaps in the content presented by the members of the program’s teaching faculty, and it has crossed my mind that this program is not very helpful. In-Hwa Shim

Of course, in multi-disciplinary in-service training programs such as the ones for EFL education, some overlaps in study content are possible and perhaps even inevitable. However, it appeared that the degree of overlap may be excessive, to the point of negatively effecting the overall quality of the program. Such excessive overlap in the study content of a given in-service program indicates shortcomings in intra-program coordination.

Another teacher thought that the basic-level and the advanced-level programs were essentially the same, that is, there was not much “advanced” about the advanced-level program.

The [in-service] training that I’m receiving now is the advanced program. But there is absolutely no difference between the advanced program and the basic program
that I was in last winter. I was helped a lot by the basic program because, at the
time, I knew very little about English education. I thought that the advanced
program, compared to the basic program, would have a little higher level of
difficulty and would give me more confidence about teaching English, but that
hasn't been the case. . . . The advanced program, as it currently is, is a waste of
time for people who have taken the basic program. Yoo-Kyung Jung

In sum, the study's emergent themes suggest that, in addition to shortcomings in
intra-program coordination, there were indications that the in-service programs also
lacked inter-program coordination. Further, it also seems likely that such shortcomings in
coordination can result in not only overlaps but also gaps in the study content. These
problems clearly have implications for the organization and implementation of in-service
programs.

No negative aspects. Not all of the teachers in the study had negative opinions
about the in-service programs. Regarding the in-service programs in which he had
participated in, a teacher stated,

All the courses were necessary, so there were no negative aspects. Dong-Ook Park

It is also notable, however, that, among the 54 participants in the study, Dong-Ook Park
was only one of two people who had nothing but positive things to say about the in-
service programs.
Interview Data

In addition to the above survey-based discussions regarding the less-than-successful aspects of training programs for elementary-school-level EFL teachers in Korea, interviews with study participants suggested three more themes: insufficiently specialized curriculum for pre-service EFL teachers, insufficient amount of in-service training time, and lack of integration between theory and practice in in-service training. Each topic will be discussed below.

Insufficiently specialized curriculum for pre-service EFL teachers. An earlier discussion noted that, according to several study participants, the universities of education have generally inadequate programs for developing specialists, not only in teaching English but also in all subject areas taught in elementary schools. The following excerpt from an interview further illustrates this point.

In-Hwa Shim: ... Of course, since 1997 [the year EFL formally became an academic subject in the national curriculum at the primary-school level], universities of education have had a department of English education — in name only.

Don: Why do you say “in name only?”

In-Hwa Shim: Universities of education have various departments — early childhood education, art education, physical education, home economics, English education, etc. — but they are divided mostly for the sake of administrative ease; all the students at the universities of education study under an almost identical curriculum for four years. They study basic courses about the ten subject areas taught in elementary school. Even though they do study one or maybe two advanced courses within their department from their second year, they study for four years the basics, the fundamentals, about art, music, physical education, social studies, science, home economics, Korean language, morality, English, and math. That's the reason why it's a little hard for the graduates to be accepted as being professionals in a particular field.
Comments about the topic of insufficiently specialized pre-service programs for EFL teachers have already been presented in the survey part of this section, so no further explanation will be given here. Suffice it to say here that, in short, In-Hwa Shim seems to be advocating a professionalization of EFL teachers and teaching in Korean elementary schools.

Insufficient amount of in-service training time. On a topic closely related to the issue of on-going in-service training, one of the teachers in the study indicated that the in-service training was insufficient in terms of contact time.

Don: Do you feel that the amount of study time in the in-service programs is sufficient?
In-Ja Oh: No.
Don: Why do you think that?
In-Ja Oh: Because the teachers receive a maximum of 240 to 300 hours of in-service training time. This is for teachers who, for all intents and purposes, have no other training in TEFL. This amount of training time is grossly insufficient.

While respecting In-Ja Oh’s opinion, a part of her above comments needs clarification. When she says, “... teachers ... have no other training in TEFL” other than the 240 – 300 hours of in-service training, she is referring to dam-im teachers. Many of the jun-dam EFL teachers have received at least some formal training in TEFL prior to participating in the in-service programs. In-Ja Oh’s comments, however, do imply the need for greater amount of training for EFL teachers, a topic that will be discussed later in this chapter and in the final chapter.
Lack of integration between theory and practice in in-service training. It was mentioned earlier that the pre-service teacher development programs may be too heavily theory-oriented, with insufficient connection between theory and practice. Likewise, four teachers in the study stated that the same problems exist in the in-service programs.

In-Ja Oh: The in-service training that I received had too much theory.
Don: What would you like instead?
In-Ja Oh: Less theory, more practice; or, theory, but related to practice. More teaching ideas: lesson plans and teaching methods.

The above conversation indicates that In-Ja Oh does not see a clear need for learning theory, at least theory that is not connected to practice. It seems that, to her, theory is by definition usually divorced from actual classroom teaching and learning and is therefore of little practical use. Furthermore, her concept of “theory” seems to have been largely formed by her own educational experiences. Evidently, the instructors during her pre- and in-service training experiences were unable to impress upon her a clear connection between theory and practice and thus the value of theoretical knowledge in EFL education. This clearly has implications for the pre- and in-service training of EFL teachers in Korea.

According to Clarke (1994), one of the causes of “dysfunctional” separation of theory and practice in language education is that too many of the people who devote their professional attention to theoretical matters are not actually language teachers, per se. As a result, such individuals may not be sufficiently sensitive to the needs of the classroom teachers. This problem clearly has implications for both pre- and in-service teacher development programs.
Summary

In sum, the study participants discussed a number of less-than-positive aspects of EFL teacher development for Korean elementary schools. It also appeared that many of the problematic issues are common to both pre-service and in-service programs. The next section presents the study participants’ suggestions for improving EFL teacher development for Korean elementary schools.

Suggestions for Improving EFL Teacher Development

This final major section of the chapter presents the study participants’ suggestions regarding ways to improve the development of primary-school-level EFL teachers in Korea. That is, the section presents the participants’ responses to the following research question: “What should be done to improve the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools?” The issues have been divided into three categories: pre-service, in-service, and comprehensive. Table 11 shows a summary of the participants’ responses.

Professional Development: Pre-Service

This section presents the study participants’ suggestions for ways to improve the pre-service programs for training primary-school-level EFL teachers in Korea. As noted earlier, unless stated otherwise, general references to pre-service training denote universities of education. The suggestions offered by the teachers in the study have been grouped into two categories: professional training and more practice-oriented training.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development: Pre-Service</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Professional training</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice-oriented training</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development: In-Service</strong></td>
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<td>On-going training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexible training</td>
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<td>Multi-level training</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Replacing grades with credits in participant evaluations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better integration of theory and practice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better instructors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development: Comprehensive</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing government funding</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-based instruction in English</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: A frequency count of the participants' suggestions for improving the EFL teacher development for Korean public elementary schools (N = 54).

**Professional training.** Six teachers in the study stated that the pre-service programs for developing primary-school-level KTEs needed to become more professionalized. One teacher, obviously deeply interested and concerned about English education in Korea, stated the following:

...At the universities of education, more professionalized programs, which address a knowledge base of theory and practice, are required. For sake of improving the pre-service teachers' ability to communicate in English, the courses related to TESOL should be conducted in English... English education departments exist in universities of education, but I have questions about how much more the students who major in English education study English-related courses, compared to students of other majors. ... To establish professionalism in English teachers and to foster their understanding and sensitivity about English/American cultures and about languages in general, the English education departments should increase the amount of time their students converse with native speakers, and the departments...
should also offer a greater variety of courses, such as teaching methodology specific for English, phonetics, phonology, syntax, English culture, etc. Otherwise, the media will continue to make an issue about professionalism in English education at the elementary schools. In-Hwa Shim

In-Hwa Shim’s comments represent well the study participants’ view about the characteristics of a “professionalized” pre-service training program for EFL teachers. That is, first of all, the program should be significantly differentiated from that of other majors. The specialized curriculum should include “a knowledge base of theory and practice,” with courses that examine the English language, linguistics, cultural issues, and teaching methods. In addition, the pre-service EFL teachers’ experience with English should be substantially differentiated from that of students in other majors. For instance, the pre-service EFL teachers should have greater contact with native speakers of English, and the courses in the major should be conducted in English. The implications of these suggestions will be addressed in the next chapter.

Practice-oriented training. This section presents a topic that is closely related to the issues of professional training and the integration of theory and practice. One of the teachers in the study explicitly mentioned that the pre-service training for primary-school-level EFL teachers needed to become oriented more towards actual classroom practices.

When I think about my own experience, my English-related studies in college were superficial. I learned nothing about classroom English, and I first became exposed to it after I actually became a classroom teacher. I don’t know how much has changed since I graduated from my university of education [she graduated in 1995], but when I was a college student, the English courses were too far removed from
actual English education in the elementary schools. . . . Learning useful teaching methods for actual classrooms seems urgent. Yoo-Kyung Jung

As Yoo-Kyung Jung herself stated, it may be possible that the curriculum for English education majors has in recent years become more practice-oriented at the university of education that she attended. However, it is notable that, although several study participants expressed the need in pre- and in-service programs for a more “practical” training, not one study participant expressed the need for a more “theoretical” one.

Professional Development: In-Service

This section describes the study participants’ suggestions for improving the in-service programs for EFL education in Korean elementary schools. The discussion is divided into the following six topics: on-going training, flexible training, multi-level training, replacing grades with credits in participant evaluations, better integration of theory and practice, and better instructors.

On-going training. Ten teachers in the study lamented the fact that the in-service training for EFL teachers, for all intents and purposes, does not go beyond two (“basic” and “advanced”) programs. In essence, they stated that they would like continuous in-service programs.

. . . in-service training programs for EFL education is very necessary and very helpful for the front-line teachers. Without these opportunities, it is very hard for elementary-school teachers to have contact with English because attending private language institutes presents problems of time and money. Instead of just stopping
with two chances - the basic and the advanced programs - it is necessary to have the teachers participate in the programs on a regular basis. Un-Kyung Min

Currently, in an effort to continue with their professional development, some EFL teachers in Korea do attend private language institutes. However, as Un-Kyung Min noted above, attending such institutes requires substantial personal investment of time and money, and it takes exceptionally dedicated teachers - although there are many in Korea - to do it on an on-going basis. Also, as will be shown later in the chapter, there are teachers who, if they could receive financial support from the government, are eager to study in language institutes on their own time. Considering the heavy workload and relatively poor pay of Korean teachers, such willingness is a very admirable display of professional dedication.

Flexible training. Six teachers in the study suggested that the in-service programs for English teachers needed to be more flexible. More specifically, the participating teachers should be given greater individual freedom to choose, within a given program, courses that differ in content and level of complexity to fit their individual needs and wants.

When receiving in-service training for English, it would be nice to be able to choose the subject areas - areas of weakness - they [the participating teachers] want and study them intensively. In my case, I’ve received training in the same subject areas three times [once in the “basic” program and twice in the “advanced” program], so there is a lot of redundancy. . . . The instruction on pronunciation, group-lessons, reading/writing, production of teaching material, and other major areas has been the same - with almost no progress - for three times, so the training is tedious. . . . I’m considering participating again in the next training session - even with my own money - so I feel that these points need to be corrected. Anyway,
if teachers could choose the study areas during the training, it would be very helpful. I would like to take classes in not only English conversation but also literature, reading, grammar, composition, and other various areas. Mi-Ra Lim

To the logistically feasible extent possible, allowing the participants of in-service programs to select courses they want to study within a program, as opposed to organizing a rigid lock-step program for all of its participants, is consistent with the “client-centred” approach to teacher development as proposed by Nunan (1989).

As explained earlier, one of the complaints about the in-service programs has been that there are virtually no new training opportunities beyond the two (basic and advanced) sessions. If, however, the two in-service programs could be made more flexible, with the participants given the freedom to choose from a variety of course offerings, then it seems much more likely that more teachers will repeatedly participate in the in-service programs – as opposed to enrolling in private language institutes or not studying at all.

**Multi-level training.** A suggestion that is similar to the idea of flexible training is the idea of multi-level training. Whereas flexible training refers to programmatic choice at the level of individual participants, multi-level training refers to separate in-service programs for groups of participants. The grouping would be based on criteria such as the participants’ level of professional expertise or English proficiency. Three of the study participants commented on this issue.

... it would also be good to separate the teachers by levels – high (teachers who majored in English or English education in college), middle (teachers who are...
currently teaching English but who didn’t major in English or English education in college), and low (general teachers) – and let them receive in-service training separately. Yoo-Kyung Jun

Regarding the in-service programs, I think there are obvious differences . . . in the quality of the participating teachers. So, instead of simply having them take the advanced program after completing the basic one, I think it would be more efficient to separate the teachers according to their level of English proficiency, then train them in level-appropriate content areas. Un-Hee Park

Although the idea of multi-level training programs appears to be reasonable, the suggestion that English proficiency be the sole criterion for determining a participant’s “level” seems problematic. This is because, although capable English proficiency is no doubt a very important pre-requisite for an EFL/ESL teacher, it is not the only criterion. Organizing multi-level programs based on differing levels of English proficiency seems sensible for courses that specifically focus on the teachers’ development of English proficiency, for example, the so-called “English Conversation” courses. However, such programs do not seem appropriate for multi-subject comprehensive training programs in which English proficiency is just one part of the overall program – even if it is a significant part. In other words, as Yoo-Kyung Jun suggests above, having separate in-service programs according to the participating teachers’ level of EFL-related expertise is a reasonable idea, and “expertise” should not be equated with English proficiency; the former encompasses much more than the latter.

Replacing grades with credits in participant evaluations. Currently, primary-school-level EFL teachers in Korea who participate in in-service training programs are given a numerical grade at the end of each session. For example, the participants may be
evaluated on such criteria as general English proficiency (based on an oral test with a native-speaking instructor), teaching ability (based on a mock teaching demonstration), professional knowledge (based on a written test), and attendance.

The grades that the participating teachers receive, usually on a one to five scale (one being the lowest, and five being the highest), are kept in their permanent personnel records, and the scores can be a decisive factor in a teacher's professional advancement, for example, whether or not a teacher will be promoted to vice principal and beyond. Two teachers in the study suggested that the current score-based grading system should be replaced with a credit/no-credit system.

Give teachers opportunities for in-service training, but don't emphasize a point-score system. The appropriate method is to give the teachers credits. Differences in scores will create alienating competition, go against the original purpose of the training programs, and add a psychological burden to the participating teachers. So-Hee Kim

On the one hand, the current numerically graded evaluation system may motivate the participants of the in-service programs to work harder than they might under a credit/no-credit system. However, the possible benefits gained through a graded system must be weighed against its potential negative effects. Grading the participants of training programs, grades that can negatively affect their professional careers, causes many teachers to have negative feelings about participating in the in-service programs, and, on a broader level, have negative feelings about an educational system that has created and justifies such a grading system. Thus, as stated by So-Hee Kim, evaluating participants
according to a credit/no-credit system seems to be a reasonable alternative to the current graded evaluation system.

Better integration of theory and practice. Based on the study participants’ complaints presented thus far about the excessively theory-oriented pre- and in-service programs for EFL education in Korean elementary schools, it should come as little surprise that several teachers in the study – three to be exact – suggested that the in-service programs need to better integrate theory and practice.

It would be good to organize workshops and so on where teachers could hear lectures on theory by professors or other lecturers, then, after the teachers have had some time to try out the theory in practice, have discussions about the theories and generalize the findings. In-Hwa Shim

In-Hwa Shim’s idea is interesting because she not only suggests a specific way to better integrate theory and practice during in-service programs, but she also suggests that the participating teachers themselves can assume the role of “theorists.” Such a view would be supported by other “theorists” in the field such as Clarke, who states,

The distinction between theory and practice in professional and public discourse is generally dysfunctional for teachers. There are a number of reasons for this. Because the individuals involved in developing theory are seldom full-time language teachers themselves, the theory/practice distinction creates strata of expertise in which teachers are considered less expert than theorists. . . (1994, p. 9)

Given the necessary guidance, the KTEs, as all good language teachers are, are capable of integrating general theory with their individual classroom experiences and situations.
Thus, for the KTEs to maximize their professional potential, both pre- and in-service teacher development programs should provide them with the opportunities and the training to develop as “theorizing practitioners”/“practicing theorists.”

**Better instructors.** Two teachers in the study stated that the instructors in the in-service programs needed to be better qualified. The respondents’ comments can be reduced to two major attributes: experience in teaching at the elementary-school level, and high level of English-Korean bilingual proficiency.

Retraining is best learned from Korean professors who have working experience in an elementary school and who can speak English perfectly. Mi-Ra Oh

I felt a great need [during in-service programs] for native-speaking instructors who have a good command of the Korean language, because the number of jun-dam English teachers who can communicate perfectly in English is extremely small... Dong-Ook Park

The attributes suggested above are, at least for now, more like ideal goals than immediate expectations. That is, very few people currently in Korea would satisfy both criteria, certainly not in sufficient numbers to adequately train in-service teachers on a national level. It is also interesting to note that, regarding the ideal attributes of instructors in in-service programs, none of the respondents mentioned content knowledge, interpersonal skills, or other generally accepted attributes of good language teachers (e.g., Horwitz, 1996; Schrier, 1993). Another important discovery is that not one of the teachers in the study questioned the belief that, as ESL/EFL teachers, native-speakers are superior to
Professional Development: Comprehensive

This section, based mainly on interviews with the study participants, presents their suggestions for improving the professional development of Korea's elementary-school-level EFL teachers, suggestions that apply to both pre- and in-service programs. The following discussion is organized into two categories: increasing government funding, and implementing more content-based instruction in English.

Increasing government funding. Five teachers in the study suggested that the Korean government should increase its funding for EFL education in Korean elementary schools, including more funding for the development of the EFL teachers.

Because English education in elementary school can be considered the first step in [the Korean children's] English education, it is very important. So, much time and money should be invested, and, at the same time, more should be invested into the continuing development of English teachers, who will need to stand at the very center of it all. More investment needs to be made to, for example, subsidize the English teachers' tuition at private foreign-language institutes and actively initiate overseas training. Hyo-Ji Son

In addition to Hyo-Ji Son, other teachers in the study, including both dam-ims and jundams, expressed their wish for greater governmental funding to subsidize the EFL teachers' private studies and to sponsor the overseas training of EFL teachers.
The following conversation is an example of the study participants' wish for financial support from the government for teachers who want to learn English on their own.

Han-Na Bae: The government should provide [the KTEs] on-going private English lessons.
Don: That’s interesting. How much should the government provide?
Han-Na Bae: It'd be nice if I could have lessons once or twice per week.
Don: Why do you want such lessons?
Han-Na Bae: Because I want to practice speaking English with native speakers, to develop my English proficiency in natural English.
Don: Natural English? As opposed to what?
Han-Na Bae: As opposed to classroom English.

In addition to her suggestion regarding government subsidies, Han-Na Bae's comments are also notable for two more reasons. One, she differentiates between "classroom" English and "natural English," indicating either that the English she uses with her students for class work may not sufficiently reflect real/realistic usage, or that her definition of "natural English" does not include "classroom English," or both. Two, she seems to believe that the best way for her to develop her proficiency in "natural English" is through conversations with native speakers of English. This illustrates another instance of a "non-native" speaker – in this case, an EFL teacher, no less – subscribing to the belief of "native-speaker superiority" in second/foreign language teaching.

Regarding government-sponsored overseas training, the study participants had differing opinions. Some who commented on overseas training supported such government-sponsored programs.
Jin-Mi Kim: I would like overseas language-learning experience, paid for by the government, preferably in Canada or the U.S.

Don: Why in those countries?

Jin-Mi Kim: Because I've heard from my fellow English teachers that those countries offer the best ESL programs and the best available teaching resources.

Jin-Mi Kim's comments are noteworthy for several reasons. One, she indicates that she would like to study overseas not only as a language teacher but as a language learner. Two, she believes that Canada and the U.S., as opposed to other ESL countries in the world, are the best places for ESL/EFL training, and furthermore, it appears that this view is commonly shared among EFL teachers in Korea.

In addition to reasons related solely to the English language, per se, other teachers in the study mentioned other reasons for studying overseas.

. . . Have the [Korean EFL] teachers experience first-hand the cultures and the locales of English-speaking countries. Hyo-Ji Son

Thus, a theme emerging from this study is that Korean elementary-school-level EFL teachers are well aware of the inter-relationship between language and culture, as well as the inherent limitations of attempting to experience foreign cultures indirectly.

While most teachers whose statements pertaining to the overseas training of Korean EFL teachers were in support of it, one teacher opposed overseas study programs, arguing that the funds for providing costly overseas training for a small number of teachers could be better used for the domestic training of a significantly larger number of teachers.
The government needs to invest efficiently in the development of English teachers: compared to overseas training, high-quality domestic training is more efficient. So-Hee Kim

In fact, the MOE recently announced that from 2002 through 2005, it will send abroad 260 (50 in 2002, 60 in 2003, 70 in 2004, and 80 in 2005) selected teachers of foreign languages (English, Japanese, French, German, and Spanish) for a two-year training course at universities, institutes of educational research, or institutes of educational administration (in C.H. Cho, 2001). The projected per-teacher expense for the two-year course is 157,100,000 won, or approximately 120,000 U.S. dollars (at the currently approximate currency exchange rate of $1=1,300 won). 50% of the funds will be provided by the national government, and the other 50% will be provided by local governments. Considering the fact that the per capita gross national income in Korea was only 8,490 U.S. dollars for 1999, the MOE’s proposal to spend so much money per teacher is astonishing for many Koreans. In light of the amount of money involved, it is somewhat surprising that not more teachers support domestic training over overseas training.

Content-based instruction in English. Two teachers in the study suggested that the teacher development programs for EFL education should include more content-based instruction in English.

Don: In an ideal situation, what kind of EFL-related training would you like to have?
Content-based instruction in English has been increasing in Korean universities, and, in light of the continuing trend towards the globalization of the nation, it is highly probable that such instruction will continue to increase in Korea. To illustrate, using universities in Singapore and Hong Kong as examples, the Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH), one of the premier universities in Korea, recently announced plans to begin conducting all graduate-level courses in English by the year 2003 (H. N. Lee, 2001e). Whether or not POSTECH will actually be able to accomplish their goal remains to be seen. What is notable is that a leading Korean university has publicly announced such plans, which will affect the future plans at many other Korean universities, because universities compete with each other for public and private funding and the recruiting of talented students.

Currently, in pre- and in-service teacher development programs for primary-school-level EFL education in Korea, almost all of the course work is conducted in Korean. The exceptions are the so-called “conversation” courses taught by “native-speaker” lecturers. Although many EFL professionals in Korea would agree that content-based instruction in English is a good idea, the proposition raises some important questions. For example: To what extent are the students, and the current professors, capable of studying in English? Is academic study conducted in English more effective than that conducted in Korean for all content courses? Is All-English instruction more effective/efficient than, say, bilingual (English and Korean) instruction? In sum, the proposal for content-based instruction in
English for EFL teacher development in Korea will probably receive more attention in the future, and it is likely that instances of such instruction will increase. However, many questions must first be addressed if the implementation of such instruction is to succeed.

Summary

It seems self-evident that the study participants offered many reasonable and practical suggestions for improving the development of EFL teachers for elementary schools in Korea. Also, this section presented the study participants’ responses only as they were given, but the responses regarding, for example, in-service programs, can often be relevant for pre-service programs, and vice versa. Further, as was with many of the participants’ comments in the earlier sections of the chapter, it appears that their suggestions for improving EFL teacher development for the primary-school-level in Korea also offer implications for secondary-level education.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of open-ended surveys, interviews, and document analyses focusing on EFL education in Korean public elementary schools. The study’s emergent themes were classified into six major sections: the first three focused on issues related to the EFL curriculum, and the latter three focused on issues related to teacher development. These themes are unique to the existing professional literature because they are the result of a first-of-its-kind study, at least in Korea, in which the study’s
participants, elementary-school-level EFL teachers, were able to give in-depth qualitative responses to research questions regarding their profession. The responses by the participants confirmed the author’s belief that, when given the opportunity to freely express themselves about their profession, classroom teachers can provide rich, thoughtful, and articulate responses. The next chapter presents discussions that integrate the study’s emergent themes within broader theoretical and practical perspectives.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The previous chapter contained the results of open-ended surveys, interviews, and document analyses. This chapter presents various discussions that integrate the study’s emergent themes within a broader perspective on both theoretical and practical levels. In other words, whereas chapter four focused on attempting to capture the voices of primary-school KTEs, this chapter endeavors to go one step further, by discussing the emergent themes in relation to their implications for the advancement of the field in general and the primary-school-level EFL education in Korea in particular.

This chapter consists of four major sections. The first presents the author’s conclusions regarding the significant themes of the study. The second contains the study’s – as compared with the study participants’ – recommendations for improving EFL education in Korean elementary schools. The third offers directions for future research. The final section presents the study’s concluding remarks.

**Significant Themes**

This section presents the author’s conclusions regarding the study’s significant themes. In other words, rather than simply reiterating the study’s various emergent
themes as discussed in the previous chapter, this section comprehensively analyzes them and summarily offers a coherent “big picture” of the complex phenomena related to the study. The themes are grouped into the following three categories: social issues, the EFL curriculum, and teacher development.

Social Issues

Some in the field of ELT (English language teaching) have stated that the profession has not paid sufficient attention to the relationship between language education and its related broader contexts (e.g., Pennycook, 1995; Phillipson, 1988). Pennycook states,

What I think is sorely lacking from the predominant paradigm of investigation into English as an international language is a broad range of social, historical, cultural, and political relationships . . . . this divorce of language from broader questions has had major implications for teaching practice and research. (1995, pp. 38 – 39)

Likewise, a macro-level analysis of EFL education in Korean elementary schools requires a discussion about the broader social contexts in which it occurs.

The themes that have emerged from this study support the generally held belief that English and EFL education have had enormous effects on Korean society. The influence of English can be found in virtually all aspects of Korean culture, including the economy, politics, and the arts. More specifically, the study reached the following four conclusions.

One, Korea possesses a great potential for progress in English education. Two, a significant portion of the Korean public is dissatisfied with public education, and this dissatisfaction has caused private studies to become a pervasive part of Korean education.
Three, the gap between the “have” and the “have not” students appears to be increasing. Four, Korea faces the “linguistic imperialism” of English. The four issues are discussed below.

**Korea’s great potential for progress in English education.** Korea appears to possess a great potential for improving the English proficiency of its people. First of all, Korea as a nation is very motivated to learn English. Korea is a nation of few natural resources, and its greatest resource is its highly educated citizens. In an era of increasing global competition, Korea has little choice but to rely on international trade for its economic survival. In order to engage in successful dialogue with foreign nations, Koreans must become proficient in the de facto global language: English. Further, because English is a key to economic success, both in and beyond Korea, becoming proficient in its use has become a major goal for individuals seeking upward social mobility. In sum, on both national and individual levels, Korea is very motivated to improve its proficiency in the usage of English.

Motivation is a necessary factor in the success of language learning, but it is not a sufficient condition by itself. In Korea, the strong motivation of its people to learn English has resulted in tremendous financial investments – both public and private – towards the procurement of resources for learning English. For example, textbooks, audio/visual materials, and internet access are relatively sophisticated and widely available in schools and for the general public. Furthermore, based on the fervor for English education in Korea, it seems safe to predict that such investments will continue into the foreseeable future.
In addition, the current Korean EFL teachers, compared to their predecessors, are becoming more expert as professionals, with better communicative ability in English and greater knowledge of EFL pedagogy. Although it may take some time, as the institutes of higher learning (e.g., universities of education) begin to provide better pre- and in-service teacher development programs for EFL teachers, the quality of EFL education will no doubt continue to improve.

In sum, the prospects for EFL education in Korean elementary schools are promising. Of course, many obstacles still must be faced, but it appears that, with continued effort, Korea and the Korean people will, on the whole, become more proficient users of English in the future.

Public’s dissatisfaction with public education: fueling of private study. It may be recalled from chapter four that many Koreans do not believe that public education alone will enable their children to succeed academically and it turn socially.

... To take my class as an example, even though the children are achieving the curricular goals outlined for their grade [the third grade], the parents are not satisfied, and, by sending their kids to hagwons and so on, the children are taught reading /writing skills that they should be learning in the fifth or sixth grade. ... At this point, the Ministry of Education has acknowledged the essential role of out-of-school study, in hagwons and so on, in the children’s education, so the parents’ trust in public education to teach their children English has hit bottom. Mi-Jung Kim

It is important to note that, as Mi-Jung Kim stated above, many parents of Korean school children appear to be dissatisfied with their children’s academic progress in school, even when the children are achieving the curricular goals for their grade. This dissatisfaction
with public education is in part caused by fierce socioeconomic competition in Korea. To illustrate, in the year 2000, only 56% of college graduates found jobs (Kang, 2001d). The figures are much more ominous for the year 2001. The MOE projects that the actual (excluding college graduates who enter graduate school or military service) employment — not the unemployment — rate for college graduates at the end of academic year 2001 is projected to be only 25% (Cho & Nam, 2001). Such extremely high unemployment rates for new college graduates clearly contribute to the escalation of social competition among Koreans.

Social competition is of course not limited to college graduates. There is strong competition among Koreans to enter universities in the first place, because college graduates on average tend to earn more income than non-college graduates (though of course there are also non-monetary reasons for attending college). According to the National Statistics Office, the gap in income between college graduates and high-school graduates has been increasing in Korea. As of September 2001, the average monthly income for a household headed by a college graduate was approximately 3.5 million won, and the income of a household headed by a high-school graduate was approximately 2.5 million won, with the actual difference slightly exceeding 1 million won (approximately 780 U.S. dollars). In comparison, the difference in income between the two groups was 380,000 in 1990. Even accounting for inflation, the gap has been increasing (in Cheong, 2001).

Within this extremely competitive social environment, many Koreans fear that if their children are not getting ahead in school, then they are getting left behind. Under such conditions, many school parents feel that they have little choice but to provide their
children with a maximum edge over their peers, and this concern has been largely responsible for the fueling of private, extra-curricular studies. (It may be recalled from chapter four that, based on figures for the year 2000, an average dual-income Korean household spent approximately 5% of its gross income for its children's private English education alone.) This extreme academic competition is related to another social problem: There are indications that students from wealthy families have significant educational advantages over students from poor families, causing a widening of the gap in academic achievement between the "have" students and the "have not" students. This problem is discussed next.

Widening of the gap between the "have" students and the "have not" students.

Currently in Korea, due primarily to fierce socioeconomic competition, private extra-curricular studies among primary- and secondary-level students (as well as pre-school-age children) are literally the norm. It goes without saying that, other things being equal, students who have the financial means for extra-curricular private studies are likely to have an educational advantage over students who do not. Indeed, many KTEs and those in the media (e.g., Cho, 2001; H. N. Lee, 2001c) have voiced concern about the disparity in academic opportunity among students in Korea.

According to a study by the National Statistics Office, in the year 2000, the money spent on private education by the wealthiest 10 percent of urban households (375,000 won per month) was approximately 6.4 times that of the money spent by the poorest 10 percent (59,000 won per month), and these statistics did not include urban households in which all potential wage earners were unemployed. (To put these figures into better
perspective, recall from chapter four that the Korean per capita gross national income for
the year 2000 was approximately 12 million won, or roughly one million won per
month.) The report further noted that this 6.4-fold disparity in money spent on children’s
private education has been steadily increasing in recent years – 4.0 in 1995, 4.3 in 1997,

In sum, it is this study’s conclusion that socioeconomic competition in Korea has
contributed to a widening of the gap in academic inequity between students from wealthy
families and those from poor ones. Furthermore, this problem of inequity has important
implications for not only EFL education in Korea but also for the nation as a whole.

Linguistic imperialism. The study also concluded that Korea and the Korean people
are currently greatly pressured by the “linguistic imperialism” (Phillipson, 1992) of the
English language. Regarding the effects of the international spread of English,
Pennycook states,

In international academic relations, the preponderance of English has profound
consequences. A large proportion of textbooks in the world are published in
English . . . students around the world are not only obliged to reach a high level of
competence in English to pursue their studies, but they are also dependent on forms
of Western knowledge that are often of limited value and extreme inappropriacy to
the local context. (1995, p. 42)

The current influence of the English language on Korea appears to be so great that many
Koreans – including politicians, academicians, and the general public – support the
legislation of making English an official language in Korea. To illustrate, the following
proposal and rationale for making English an official language in Korea was made by a
Korean professor of ELT.

The need for an innovative environment in English education in Korea is inevitable
as we face the digital revolution in the 21st century. The power of English language
can be considered as a fundamental means of mutual survival and competition in
the global village. In addition, it is an essential tool for global communication and
the propagation of Korean culture and its value system to the world community.
Therefore, English ought to be taught and used as an official language. (Keem,
2000, p. 167).

(An interesting point in Keem’s comments is his argument that English could be a tool
for “the propagation of Korean culture and its value system,” an ironic twist to linguistic
imperialism.)

In the interest of empowering “non-native” speakers of English in the face of the
global encroachment of English, Rogers (1982) argues that the teaching of EIL (English
as an international language) should be discouraged. However, such a proposal was
strong opposed by others (e.g., Abbott, 1984; Prodromou, 1988) who argued that denying
people access to English creates an even worse problem. (An analogous situation has
occurred in the U.S., in which some well-meaning teachers, in the interest of empowering
students of minority groups, refused to teach them English of the dominant discourse.
Opposing such a stance, Delpit argued, “Teachers must acknowledge and validate
students’ home language without using it to limit students’ potential” (1992, p. 301).)

“Imperialism” implies, among other things, power, control, and exploitation.
However, as Keem showed in his above quote, English can be used not only against the
Korean people, but also by and for the Korean people. In an ideal world, the decision of who will control and "exploit" the English used by the Korean people would be determined by the Korean people themselves. Time will tell to what extent the actual and the ideal coincide.

The EFL Curriculum

The following discussion presents the study's major emergent themes regarding Korea's national curriculum for primary-school-level EFL education. The themes are organized around the following seven points: a communication-oriented curriculum; a lack of long-term stability, unrealistic curricular goals; a mismatch between the curricular goals and the syllabus, curricular policies based on political motivations over empirical evidence, insufficient teacher input in policy matters, and inadequate curriculum evaluation. Each will be discussed in greater detail below.

A communication-oriented curriculum. The current national curriculum for primary-school-level EFL education in Korea is a significant departure from that for the secondary level. Compared to the secondary-level curriculum, which is consistent with the contents of the CSAT (a detailed explanation about this nationally administered college entrance examination was given in chapter four), the primary-level curriculum is more communication-oriented, with a strong emphasis on improving the learners' listening and speaking skills.

The primary-school-level EFL curriculum is not free of weaknesses (as has been discussed in chapter four and will be discussed further in this section). However, it should
be remembered that EFL education in Korean elementary schools has been in existence for less than four years (as of 2001). As with most other large-scale complex endeavors, some problems are to be expected with the EFL curriculum, especially at this relatively early stage of implementation. Despite the shortcomings, however, considering the fact that Korea’s overall goal for EFL learning in public education is to prepare the learners to communicate world-wide through English, the current communication-oriented curriculum at the primary-school level appears to be set on a sound foundation.

A lack of long-term stability. The national curriculum for primary-school-level EFL education in Korea may be basically sound in terms of its communicative orientation, but there is evidence that the curriculum lacks long-term stability. As one illustrative example of a lack of long-term stability in the EFL curriculum, recall from chapter four that, only three years after its implementation, the amount of class time allotted for the study of English was reduced by 50% (from two 40-minute periods to one 40-minute period per week) for grades three and four.

The instability in the EFL curriculum seems to be due in part to a lack of adequate long-term planning. As evidence of this, recall from chapter four that universities of education throughout Korea founded departments of English education in 1997, the same year EFL education was implemented in the primary schools. As the teacher who pointed this out insightfully argued, the severe shortage of qualified EFL teachers at the time of curriculum implementation could have been significantly alleviated if the government had had the foresight to do one of the following two things: either establish the English education departments in the universities of education several years before the curriculum implementation or...
was implemented, or delay the implementation of the EFL studies until several years after
the founding of the English education departments. Of course, it is easy to make
criticisms in hindsight, but events such as the one just described raises questions about
the long-term vision of the policy makers.

The themes that emerged from this study suggest that the unstable and myopic
educational policies are only a part of a general pattern in Korean education, and it also
appears that such policies are due in large part to an unstable leadership at the cabinet
level of government. To illustrate, as already explained in chapter four, there were six
different ministers of education during president Kim Dae-Joong’s first three years in
office, with four of the personnel changes occurring within a one-year span. One result of
the frequent changes in leadership in the MOE is that there is little time for a minister to
establish, let alone see to fruition, long-term plans. Thus, there is always the risk that a
minister is tempted to “make his mark” by attempting to create policies that are markedly
different from those created by his predecessor(s), before he himself is replaced. Under
such unstable leadership, it seems almost inevitable that the EFL curriculum lacks long-
term stability and continuity.

Unrealistic curricular goals. The study’s data also suggest that some of the MOE’s
curricular goals are unrealistic. The following case is one example. According to the
mandates of the Seventh National Curriculum, the second stage of which went into effect
in 2001 for grade 1 of middle school and grades 3 and 4 of primary school, the in-class
study of English must be conducted only in English. However, in a study conducted by
the MOE itself, it was found that only approximately 7.5% (5,074 of 67,464) of primary-
and secondary-level EFL teachers nation-wide stated that, if required, they could teach English using English only (in H. N. Lee, 2001a). (In addition to the communicative ability of the teachers, that of the students is another significant obstacle to the above-mentioned "immersion" curriculum. In other words, even if all the EFL teachers could conduct class in English only, it is debatable whether or not such a program would be in the students' best interest. Unlike in the immersion programs in countries such as Canada and the U.S., where the target language is used during most of the in-school time, the amount of in-school time during which the Korean primary-school students are "immersed" in English is limited to at most 80 minutes (two 40-minutes periods when English is studied) per week. Under such input-deficient circumstances, the effectiveness of the English-only program is highly questionable. In fact, according to one follow-up report (H. N. Lee, 2001b), even in classes where the teachers were fairly successfully speaking to their students in English, many students could neither adequately comprehend the teacher nor speak English well enough to fully participate in the class work."

Cases of unrealistic curricular goals for foreign language education are not unique to Korea. Regarding foreign language education in the United States, Marinova-Todd et al. (2001) states,

... many school districts in the United States are contemplating introducing foreign language instruction in the primary grades, at considerable cost. Discussions with proponents of these programs reveal that they have extremely unrealistic notions about how much first graders will learn during two to three 30-minute lessons a week... (p. 172)
There appear to be three major reasons that the goals for the primary-school EFL curriculum in Korea are often unrealistic. One, the makers of curricular policies are usually too far removed from the classrooms. The appointments of cabinet posts in Korea are highly politically motivated, and, consequently, the ministers of education in Korea have generally been career politicians or professors (not necessarily in the field of education) of prestigious universities. Few of the recent ministers of education have had personal experience in teaching in primary- or secondary-level education. Thus, the makers of educational policies are often criticized by the public for living in a world of ivory towers. Simply put, the policy makers frequently do not have a clear understanding of what is possible and what is not possible in actual classrooms.

Two, if a minister of education were not personally knowledgeable in matters relating to primary- and secondary-level education, then it would seem that he (all ministers of education in Korea have been males; the imbalance of males and females in educational leadership – i.e., in Korea, a great majority of the primary-school-level classroom teachers are female, but most of the upper-level administrators are male – is another interesting issue) should consult with, among others, actual classroom teachers when determining policies. However, according to the teachers in the study, the process for making educational policies in Korea is very top-down, without sufficient input from classroom teachers. This problem of insufficient teacher input in the determination of policy decisions will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

The third major cause of unrealistic curricular goals is that the democratic political system in Korea tempts the policy makers (i.e., politicians) to make to the public promises that they cannot keep. One result of the extreme academic competition in Korea
is that the parents’ expectations for their children’s English education greatly exceed what the public schools can realistically deliver, based on the constraints of the current resources. In short, voters demand that the public schools must “get our kids to speak English very well, as soon as possible; anything less is an educational failure.” Despite the unrealistic public demands, under strong political pressure from voters, politicians are tempted to make unrealistically optimistic promises, which often become educational “goals.” As a result, when the “goals” are not met, various interest groups (including politicians, parents of school children, educators, private businesses, and the media) blame each other: the teachers get blamed for being incompetent, the government for being uncaring, the parents for being pushy, businesses for being exploitive, the media for being sensation-seeking, and so on. In all this, the real sufferers are of course the children.

Under the current educational environment in Korea, it is little wonder that some of the goals of the primary-school-level EFL curriculum are unrealistic. The unrealistic curricular goals are closely related to the topic of the next discussion: This study has concluded that a serious mismatch exists between the nationally mandated curricular goals and the syllabus for primary-school-level EFL education in Korea. (The issue of mismatch is treated separately from the issue of unrealistic goals because the former does not necessarily imply the latter.)

A mismatch between the curricular goals and the syllabus. Another theme to emerge in the study was that there appears to be a significant mismatch between the goals and the syllabus of the national curriculum for primary-school-level EFL education in
Korea (the definition of "syllabus" in the context of this study is defined in chapter four). This mismatch, according to Johnson (1989b), is the opposite of a coherent curriculum, in which the goals and the syllabus are consistent and compatible.

As an illustrative example of this mismatch, according to the Seventh National Curriculum, the MOE has announced that, from year 2001, grades 5 and 6 will still hold two 40-minute EFL classes per week, but grades 3 and 4 will have only one 40-minute class per week. Based on the limited amount of time EFL is to be studied in school, the MOE-mandated curricular goals and the amount of learning content assigned to achieve the goals seem grossly mismatched. According to the MOE's mandates, the total amount of time that students learn EFL in elementary school is 140 hours: about 24 hours per year in grades 3 and 4, and about 48 hours per year in grades 5 and 6. (The calculations were based on a 35-week school year and 40-minute classes.) Seen in this light, it seems not only grossly unrealistic but grossly unfair — to both students and their teachers — to expect students to be able to, for example, "engage in easy and simple conversations [creating sentences consisting of no more than seven words, unless phrases are connected by a conjunction] about personal life, home, and school" by the end of grade three (MOE, 1997).

One negative impact of the mismatches between the goals and the content of the EFL curriculum, in a nation that is already ultra-competitive in the education of school children, is the proliferation of private, extra curricular studies. As explained earlier in the chapter, the proliferation of private studies has in turn contributed to a gap in academic achievement between children from homes that can afford private studies and those from homes that cannot. (In addition, it should be noted that private studies are not equal in
terms of quality; such studies can range from one-on-one tutorials with Ph.D. holders to lecture-style classes taught by teachers of dubious qualifications.) And, the number of elementary-school children who fall academically behind their peers is alarmingly high. According to the Department of Education of the Kyung-gi province (in K.S. Park, 2001), the English skills of 8.6% (10,566 of 122,600) of the first-year middle-school students (i.e., students who had studied English for four years during elementary school) in the province were so low as to require remedial assistance. The study further found that many of these students did not know the English alphabet in its entirety. (In addition, it should be noted that, as of fiscal year 2001, Kyung-gi was the wealthiest among the eight Korean provinces in terms of “gross regional domestic product” (in Y. B. Park, 2001). Thus, it is highly possible that the percentage of first-year middle-school students who require remedial help in English is higher in the other seven provinces of Korea.)

In public education, a curriculum and its syllabus must be organized in a way that enables all students to meet the educational objectives. However, this does not seem to be the case with the EFL curriculum for Korean elementary schools. This problem will be addressed again in the “Recommendations” section of this chapter.

Curricular policies based on political motivations over empirical evidence. As briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, it appears that policies regarding the EFL curriculum for public primary schools in Korea are, not surprisingly, influenced by public opinion. Public education, by its very nature, cannot be separated from politics, and in a democratic society, active public participation in the determination of policies regarding public education should be welcomed and encouraged. However, it should be
remembered that a popular opinion may not necessarily be the most well-reasoned one. In other words, a potential downside of public participation in the determination of educational policies is that the majority, or a powerful minority, does not always make the most informed – let alone the most rational – decisions.

Ill-informed curricular policies in foreign/second language education are not unique to Korea. Regarding this problem, Marinova-Todd et al. cite several examples:

In the United States, as well as in many other parts of the world (including at least Japan, Russia, Costa Rica, China, and Taiwan), policies for foreign language teaching and bilingual education are being made using arguments concerning the CP [critical period], often based on misinterpretations of the research findings.

(2001, p. 172)

Describing the American educational system, Airasian (1988) claims that very few of the national-level governmental policies for the improvement of education are created solely on the basis of empirical evidence. Rather, what often happens is that policies are implemented, then research is conducted to assess the effects of the new policies.

It is the conclusion of this study that Korea’s primary-school-level EFL curriculum contains policies that are not based on empirical evidence, perhaps the most striking one concerning the grade in which EFL is introduced in school. As reported earlier, students in the Korean public education system begin studying EFL in the third grade of primary school. However, the prevailing opinion among experts in SLA and foreign/second language education (e.g., Burstall, 1975; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Singleton, 1989) is that, unless done quite intensively and systematically, studying an L2 from an early age does not result in superior (compared to later starters) ultimate level of target-language
proficiency. In short, considering the fact that the time allocated by the Seventh National Curriculum to the study of EFL at the primary-school level is no more than 140 hours distributed over four years, most experts would agree that introducing EFL in grade three would result in no greater English proficiency than introducing it later, say, in grade five or six, or even in middle school.

Furthermore, despite the empirical evidence to the contrary, an attempt to delay the introduction of EFL education in Korean elementary schools will likely be met by public opposition, even if the public is informed about the evidence. In fact, there has been similar precedence in other countries. For example, in Israel, despite the results of a domestic large-scale, longitudinal study – which showed that students beginning the study of EFL in grade four of primary school actually performed better on subsequent tests than students who began in grade three – and the government’s deliberate and active dissemination of the study’s results to the public, the public still demanded (and had their demand granted) that EFL begin to be taught in the third, as opposed to the fourth, grade (Spolky & Shohamy, 1999).

In sum, it appears that Korean governmental policies regarding EFL learning – and, for that matter, education in general – have not always been based on rational, well-informed reasoning. Thus, to what extent Korea’s future curricular policies concerning EFL education will be determined by public pressure versus empirical evidence remains to be seen. Suggestions for improving the current state of affairs will be offered later in the chapter.
Insufficient teacher input in policy matters. This study has concluded that, regarding EFL education for Korean elementary school, the opinions of classroom teachers are not sufficiently reflected in the determination of curricular policies. To provide just one example, recall from earlier in the chapter the MOE’s mandate for “All-English” teaching in elementary schools, despite a national study conducted by the MOE itself in which it was found that only approximately 7.5% of primary- and secondary-level EFL teachers stated that they were able to teach English using English only. Such disregard by the makers of educational policies for the opinions of the classroom teachers is clearly detrimental to the well-being of public education in Korea.

Noting a prevailing trend in educational policy making, Rodgers (1989) states the following:

Current critics of the conventional approaches to curriculum development, program evaluation, and educational decision making thus tend to reject linear, quantitative, top-down, participant-restricted models in favor of more multi-dimensional, qualitative, interactive, and participant-extended options. . . . (p. 28)

While not wishing to impose what may be termed “Western” ideas on Korea, the makers of educational policies in Korea should seriously consider Rodgers’s comments, especially in light of the fact that many Korean teachers themselves support the “participant-extended” approach to educational decision making. In fact, there are clear indications that Korean teachers are taking measures toward securing political empowerment. To illustrate, recall from chapter four that the Korean Teachers and Educational Workers Union, which is Korea’s largest teachers’ union, had approximately 70,000 members as of June, 2000. To put the figure into better perspective, 70,000
members would account for approximately 20% of all primary- and secondary-level teachers and administrators in Korea, a solid membership rate for an organization established in 1989 but which only gained legal status in 1999. (The calculation of 20% is based on an extrapolation of data according to the “Editorial Association of Registered Korean Schools, 1998,” which stated that there were a total of 337,712 primary- and secondary-level teachers and administrators in Korea in 1998.)

In sum, the study’s emergent themes suggest that Korean primary-school EFL teachers currently lack the influence to sufficiently determine the educational policies that affect them. However, considering the paradigm shift from the “participant-restricted” to the “participant-extended” approach in educational policy making and the social movement in Korea towards greater democratization, it also appears that Korean teachers, including EFL teachers, will become a greater factor in the determination of Korea’s educational policies in the future.

Inadequate curriculum evaluation. In a discussion regarding second language curricula, Johnson defines a coherent curriculum as “. . . one in which decision outcomes from the various stages of development [curriculum planning, ends/means specifications, program implementation, and implementation in the classroom] are mutually consistent and complementary, and learning outcomes reflect curricular aims” (1989a, p. xiii). Evaluation, according to Johnson, is not a separate stage but an essential part of all four of the above stages. However, the Korean primary-school EFL curriculum does not appear to have a systematic method of evaluating these four stages of the curriculum. (China, another Asian country in the midst of reforming its national English education...
curriculum, also appears to have a problem with curriculum evaluation. According to Wu, "... the reformers are still far from knowing a sound basis on which to plan the sequence of learning. Nor do curriculum reformers have a system of evaluating the planning yet" (2001, p. 192).

Perhaps the most significant cause of Korea's evaluation problem with regards to the EFL curriculum is that, in an effort to prevent the intensification of academic competition among students, the MOE explicitly forbids the formal testing of students' EFL proficiency. (A more detailed explanation about student assessment was presented in chapters two and four.) Because the current system of student assessment as mandated by the MOE is completely process-based -- as opposed to outcome-based -- it is a virtually impossible task for teachers to accurately evaluate all of their students within the very limited amount of contact time, which in turn makes it virtually impossible to assess to what extent the EFL curriculum has been successful, much less evaluate the effectiveness of the various specific stages of the curriculum. In other words, the MOE's current policies on student assessment, while laudable in intention, do not appear to provide a reasonable method for answering questions about the effectiveness of the current EFL curriculum, as the following quote reveals:

At the elementary-school level, English education can be considered a success in terms of the teaching methods used. But, setting aside the question of which methods are better or worse, I'm honestly not sure if the current English education is effective or not. . . . In-Hee Jo

An inadequate system for evaluating the EFL curriculum has contributed to two additional consequences. One, as noted in chapter four, feeling the need for criterion-
referenced student assessments (e.g., short tests of reading and spelling) but being forbidden by the MOE to conduct them, some teachers nevertheless conduct them in an example of “subversive teaching.” Two, the EFL proficiency of individual students is not adequately evaluated by their teachers, and, as a result, many students who need remedial assistance pass through the primary-school system without being identified nor of course helped. (Recall the earlier discussion about the problem of almost 9% of first-year middle-school students needing remedial assistance in English.)

In summary, evaluation is an essential part of curriculum planning, but the EFL curriculum for Korean primary schools appears to lack an adequate system of curriculum evaluation. Suggestions for improving the current conditions are offered in the “Recommendations” section of this chapter. The next discussion focuses on the study’s significant themes regarding the development of EFL teachers for Korean elementary schools.

Teacher Development

As presented in chapter four, the KTEs in the study provided a good description of the current state of affairs regarding the development of primary-school EFL teachers in Korea. This section presents a synthesis of the study’s emergent themes regarding the development of the EFL teachers. The following three topics are discussed below: the teachers’ professional potential, and insufficient specialized training, insufficient input by teachers in policy decisions regarding their own professional development.
Teachers of great potential. It is the study’s conclusion that the EFL teachers in Korean elementary schools have the potential to become experts in their profession. (The ideal attributes of good language teachers have been discussed in chapter two.) Of course, individual differences exist among teachers. For instance, some teachers in the study appeared energetic, optimistic, and ambitious; others seemed burned out. For some, teaching EFL in elementary schools has been a very satisfying experience; for others, the experience (or the prospect of it) was nightmarish. However, as a group, these teachers were hard working, very intelligent people who cared about the welfare of their students and the future of Korean education. It is a further conclusion of the study that many of the teachers, especially the jun-dam teachers, possessed English proficiency that was more than adequate to meet the mandates of the current primary-school EFL curriculum.

The KTEs may have the will and the capacity to become experts, but, unfortunately, the study data suggests that neither the pre- nor the in-service programs for KTEs has been satisfactory in the development of EFL teachers. In all fairness, it should be remembered that programs specifically designed for the development of primary-school-level EFL teachers in Korea are in their infancy. For instance, universities of education, which prepare teachers for primary schools, only established the department of English education in 1997. Given more time and continuous effort towards improving the pre- and the in-service programs, the current and future KTEs will undoubtedly become even better teachers.

The topic of teacher development is clearly important for EFL education in Korean elementary schools, and it has implications for teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition. This topic will be revisited in the “Recommendations” section.
Insufficient specialized training. Another theme to emerge from the study was that the training for primary-school KTEs appears to be, as yet, not specialized enough. Regarding pre-service training in Korea, it may be recalled from chapter four that the universities of education require their graduates, regardless of their major (e.g., EFL, music, physical education, and art), to be familiar with the pedagogy of all of the general subject areas taught in elementary school. This system of creating teachers who are “jacks-of-all-trades, masters of none” may be ideal (or unavoidable) for the preparation of dam-im teachers, but it is the conclusion of this study that such practice has resulted in the serious dilution of training for the EFL jun-dam teachers-to-be.

This inadequacy in specialized training could be surmised through not only the study participants’ explicit comments to that effect but also through their responses regarding other matters in foreign language education. It seems that the inadequate specialized training of the EFL teachers has hindered many of them from obtaining a solid base of essential professional knowledge, as evidenced by a number of beliefs that the KTEs in the study expressed regarding foreign language education. To illustrate, the following beliefs, not listed in any particular order, were expressed by the study participants.

1. Knowledge of theory is not very useful for actual classroom teaching.
2. EFL should not be introduced to children at too early an age, because doing so would be detrimental to the development of their L1.
3. “Native speakers” are better teachers of EFL than “non-native speakers.”
4. “Native-like” pronunciation is an important qualification for an EFL teacher.
Misconceptions regarding foreign language education may be expected among lay people, but professional language teachers should know more than non-professionals. The usefulness of theory when integrated with practice has been well argued not only in general education but also in the field of foreign/second language education (e.g., Clarke, 1994). Likewise, the issue of “additive” (as opposed to “subtractive”) bi-lingual education (Widdowson, 1993) as well as the positive effects of L2 learning on the L1 learning of school-age children has been documented (e.g., Harley & Lapkin, 1984). Similarly, the fallacy of “native speaker” superiority in language teaching has been critiqued (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992).

In conclusion, in order for the primary-school EFL teachers in Korea to maximize their professional potential and thereby be the most effective teachers for their students, their training should better cater to their professional needs. Specific suggestions for ways to improve the training programs are offered later in the chapter.

Insufficient input by teachers in policy decisions regarding teacher development.

The study has concluded that, as in the process for determining the policies regarding the EFL curriculum, the voices of the primary-school EFL teachers in Korea have not been sufficiently reflected in the policy decisions regarding their own professional development. This is very unfortunate because, sociopolitical issues aside, as clearly shown in chapter four, when given the opportunity, the KTEs can offer many insightful suggestions for improving the pre- and in-service programs for EFL teachers.

Because a similar discussion about insufficient teacher input in policy making has already been discussed earlier in the chapter (in the discussion about the EFL curriculum),
this problem with regards to teacher development will not be pursued in depth here.
Suffice it to say that, as yet, it appears that a “client-centered” approach to teacher
development (Nunan, 1989) has not been implemented in sufficient measure for the
training of Korean primary-school EFL teachers.

Summary
This section presented the significant themes that emerged from the study’s data,
themes that were discussed according to the following three categories: social issues, the
curriculum, and teacher development. The next section presents the study’s
recommendations for improving the curriculum and teacher development of EFL
education in Korean primary schools.

Recommendations
Based on the study’s emergent themes, the following eleven recommendations are
offered for improving the EFL education in Korean elementary schools. The
recommendations are based on the author’s independent analysis of the study’s data. In
other words, some of the recommendations coincide with those already offered by the
study participants, while others are the author’s alone. The first six recommendations
pertain primarily to the curriculum, and the remaining five relate mainly to teacher
development. Each of the eleven recommendations will be discussed below in greater
detail.
1. Establish a stable and coherent long-term curriculum.

2. Increase the participation of classroom teachers in educational policy making.

3. Balance linguistic functions and forms in the curriculum.

4. Establish systematic curriculum evaluation.

5. Discontinue the “English Only” teaching policy.

6. Delay the introduction of the EFL program until the upper grades.

7. Adopt a “client-centered” approach to professional training.

8. Establish better-specialized professional training.

9. Increase material and non-material teacher support.

10. Limit overseas training or replace it with domestic training.

11. Discontinue or modify the native-speaking teacher programs.

The EFL Curriculum

This section is organized into discussions about the following six recommendations for improving the EFL curriculum of Korean elementary schools: (1) establish a stable and coherent long-term curriculum; (2) increase the participation of classroom teachers in educational policy making; (3) balance linguistic functions and forms in the curriculum; (4) establish systematic curriculum evaluation; (5) discontinue the “English Only” teaching policy; and (6) delay the introduction of the EFL program until the upper grades. The first two and the last of these six recommendations have also been suggested by the study participants; the third through the fifth recommendations are the author’s own.
Establish a stable and coherent long-term curriculum. Failures in a curriculum, claims Rodgers (1989), are more often due to poor planning than problems with curricular content, per se. Regarding Korea’s primary-school-level EFL education, it was pointed out earlier in the chapter that the current curriculum appears to be neither stable nor coherent. Thus, the study recommends that the MOE establish a more stable and coherent long-term curriculum for the EFL education program.

Establishing a stable vision of the curriculum should begin with a needs assessment, and the needs assessment should in turn actively seek input from classroom teachers. In addition, the leadership positions at the MOE (e.g., the minister of education, the vice-minister, etc.) should include experts in education (as opposed to, for example, career politicians), preferably individuals who have extensive knowledge about and experience in teaching in primary- and/or secondary-level schools. Such leadership at the MOE should then be entrusted to develop long-term curricular plans, then, also very importantly, their initiatives should be given sufficient time and opportunity to develop to completion.

As stated earlier in the chapter, the study’s data suggest that there are mismatches between the goals and the syllabus of Korea’s EFL curriculum for primary schools. Such mismatches, in which the curricular goals and the syllabus are neither mutually consistent nor complementary, would make a prime case study of a curriculum lacking in what Johnson calls coherence (1989b). Furthermore, Johnson states that a coherent curriculum has a necessary precondition:

... coherence can only be formally demonstrated and mismatch remedied to the extent that the processes and products of decision making are accessible to
investigation. . . . If this precondition can be met, evaluation should be integrated into each stage and aspect of the decision-making process. . . . (p. 23)

Thus, to establish and maintain a coherent curriculum, the policy makers should follow Johnson’s suggestions by making all aspects of the policy-making process transparent for public investigation and integrating the resulting evaluations into all stages of the decision-making process.

It should also be noted that the decisions about the curriculum at the primary-level must be considered in light of their implications for the secondary- and the tertiary-level curricula, and vice versa. That is, the curricula at the three levels must be integrated, and, very importantly in Korea, the curriculum at all three levels must be planned and implemented in a way that is consistent with the content and format of the CSAT (the College Scholastic Aptitude Test, a nationally administered test, the results of which greatly affect the test takers’ options for tertiary-level education). This is a particularly difficult problem for EFL education because, while the mass-testing of the so-called receptive skills (i.e., reading and listening comprehension) are logistically feasible, and in fact is already a part of the CSAT, such mass-testing for the productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing) are as yet not logistically possible. In sum, if the MOE is truly committed to establishing a communicative EFL curriculum at the primary-school level, it should also commit itself to reforming the English section of the CSAT in a way that enables the testing of not only the receptive but also the productive skills.

In short, to improve the current EFL education program for Korean elementary schools, it is recommended that the MOE first of all establish a stable and coherent long-term curriculum, because educational progress cannot be expected to occur without a
sound foundation. Lastly, it should also be remembered that the progress may not be rapid or free of difficulties; thus, the Korean people should have patience, remembering that even positive educational reforms often take much time to bear fruit.

Increase the participation of teachers and the public in policy making. In a democratic society, it is only logical that policies affecting public education reflect the will of the public. In addition, such policies should especially include sufficient input from teachers, who, after all, are the most knowledgeable of all people about the needs of their classrooms and their students. However, as stated earlier, the results of this study seem to indicate that the curricular policies for EFL education in Korean elementary schools seem to be largely determined by committees that do not sufficiently include the input of EFL teachers or the general public. Thus, the study recommends that the policy making process for EFL education in Korean elementary schools should include greater participation by the teachers and the public.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the study's data seem to indicate that the policy makers' failure to adequately take into account the voices of the EFL teachers in curriculum-related decisions has manifested itself in the form of unrealistic curricular goals. Furthermore, the issue of teacher participation in policy making is essentially an issue of power and empowerment, about which Clark et al. (1996) state, "... power is not simply an issue of control of one group over another, but, reconceived as empowerment, it means being able to act together for the purpose of solving significant problems" (p. 611, original emphasis). Thus, empowering teachers implies the effective utilization of their expertise towards cooperatively conceived educational goals, which in turn would
lead to the likelihood of success in the determination and implementation of educational policies.

In addition to the teachers, the general public should be given greater participatory power in the determination of educational policies. However, just as the teachers need to continue to improve their professional knowledge, the general public should also become more knowledgeable about EFL-related matters (e.g., realistic curricular goals and practical constraints) if informed decision making is to be expected. Disagreements among various interest groups (e.g., teachers, school administrators, politicians, and parents) are not necessarily bad; they can be a sign of dialogue toward common goals. However, misunderstandings must be eliminated. In sum, the Korean government should give the public greater power in the educational policy making process, but, at the same time, through open dialogues as well as public announcements, it should try to ensure that the public is well informed about the issues at stake.

The issue of broader public representation in educational policy making is not so simple, however. As was shown earlier in the case of EFL education in Israeli primary schools, it cannot be assumed that well-informed people will make well-reasoned decisions. Thus, educational policy makers should be prepared to confront the following dilemma: What is the best course of action if the popular will of the public is at odds with empirical findings of research? That is, on the one hand, it seems only right that, in democratic education, the values and the wishes of the public must be respected. On the other hand, educational policy making should not ignore research-based evidence; it seems only sensible that educational policies must be made based on intellectual reasoning, on the foundation of empirical evidence, not on the basis of emotional urges.
This study’s recommendation regarding the dilemma is not perfect, just the most expedient, and the above-mentioned case of Israel is a good precedent. That is, the government should do its utmost to inform the public of the existing empirical evidence germane to the decision-making process. However, in the end, the will of the popular majority should be followed, whether or not it is in accord with research evidence. This is the price of living by the rules of a democratic society: Democracy is not a perfect form of government, but it is the best alternative available.

In sum, educational policy making should include, indeed, value, the input of classroom teachers, who, after all, are the people who best know what goes on in the classrooms, and the process should also include the input of the general public, for whom, after all, public education exists. Indeed, the term, “educational policy makers” should by definition include teachers and the public as well as administrative agents of the government. A policy-making process that does not do so is not only immoral, it will inevitably do disservice to the people who matter the most in public education: the school children.

Balance linguistic functions and forms in the curriculum. It was mentioned in chapter four that the MOE’s mandate for a “communication-based” curriculum has led to pedagogical practice that de-emphasizes the systematic study of linguistic form. In addition, as also mentioned in chapter four, many study participants indicated that the learning of the four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) should be integrated from the outset of EFL education (i.e., grade three). However, none of the study participants explicitly suggested that the study of English should integrate
linguistic functions and forms ("forms" denote written text, and also the issue of accuracy). The prevailing thought within the profession, however, is that a second/foreign language curriculum that encourages communicative language learning (as discussed by, for example, Ellis, 1994; Lightbown & Spada, 1990) must strive to find an optimal balance between teaching linguistic functions and forms. In other words, effective study of communicative functions cannot occur without the concurrent study of linguistic forms. Thus, the EFL curriculum for Korean elementary schools should better balance the study of linguistic functions and forms.

Establish systematic curriculum evaluation. It was discussed earlier in the chapter that the EFL education in Korean elementary schools does not appear to have a systematic form of curriculum evaluation. Thus, the study recommends that a system be established for evaluating the curriculum. Such an evaluation system must be comprehensive, that is, evaluation "... should be integrated into each stage and aspect of the decision-making process..." (Johnson, 1989b, p. 23). Furthermore, the evaluation process should be transparent, in the sense that it must be accessible to internal as well as external investigations.

A curriculum can be evaluated in terms of its "process" or "product," and a coherent evaluation system integrates these two complementary aspects (Johnson, 1989b). However, because the current system of student assessment for primary-school-level EFL education as mandated by Korea's MOE is completely process-based - as opposed to outcome-based - it is impossible to clearly assess the product aspect of the curriculum (i.e., its overall effectiveness), much less assess the status of the various stages within the
curriculum. Thus, to create an evaluation system in which the process as well as the product of the EFL curriculum can be assessed, the study recommends that, rather than mandating either extreme of all process-based assessment or all outcome-based assessment, the MOE should mandate a more flexible utilization of both approaches, with the purpose of evaluation dictating the method.

Discontinue the “English Only” teaching policy. The Seventh National Curriculum mandates that primary-school-level KTEs must conduct EFL classes entirely in English. However, for two reasons, this study recommends that the mandate be reconsidered in favor of a policy that instead encourages the maximum – as opposed to the exclusive – use of English by teachers and students during the study of English.

First of all, the “English Only” policy seems unrealistic in that it does not appear to sufficiently take into account the current English proficiency of the vast majority of the primary-school-level KTEs. As mentioned earlier, a study conducted by the MOE itself found that only approximately 7.5% of primary- and secondary-level EFL teachers nation-wide stated that, if required, they could teach English using English only (in H. N. Lee, 2001a). Despite these findings, the MOE has so far made no move to amend the “English Only” mandate in the Seventh National Curriculum.

Secondly, even if all primary-school-level KTEs were able to conduct class entirely in English, there are still pedagogical arguments against it. In Korea, where the students and the teachers share the same L1, it may be much more efficient and effective at times to teach and learn English using the students’ and the teachers’ common L1 (Korean) as well as the target language (English) (see, for example, Medgyes, 1994; 1999). In short,
the purpose of a given lesson and the circumstances surrounding the lesson should dictate what language(s) should be used by the teacher and the students.

**Delay the introduction of the EFL program until the upper grades.** It may be recalled from chapter four that several teachers in the study stated that the EFL education currently being implemented in Korean elementary schools has not resulted in adequate “return on investment.” To illustrate, recall the following quote:

Compared to the “input” invested in English education for Korean elementary schools, the “output” is too small. Furthermore, the “output” is not a result of public “input,” but that of private education paid for by individual families. The problem is to the extent that I personally regret paying taxes for elementary-school English education. If this system is the best that can be done, and the current results are all that can be expected, then it would be better if the English curriculum disappeared altogether from the elementary schools. Yong-Hee Kim

Thus, the study recommends that the EFL program in Korean elementary schools be introduced in the upper grades, for instance, the fifth grade.

The recommendation is essentially a compromise between the Korean public’s demand for the establishment of early EFL education in schools and research findings (e.g., Burstall, 1975; Lightbown & Spada, 1999) indicating that, unless students receive substantial amounts of high-quality instruction in the target language, simply starting L2 education at an early age will not result in significantly superior results, compared to students who begin when they are adolescents. The main motivation behind this proposal is to “Do less, but do it better.” In other words, the main intent is to take the human and material resources currently being invested into four grades (3 through 6) and concentrate

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them into two grades (5 and 6). For instance, it has been noted several times in this study that there currently is a shortage of well-qualified primary-school-level KTEs. By offering EFL in only two grades, fewer teachers would be needed, compared to offering EFL in the current four grades. A parallel argument is also valid for the concentrated usage of material resources.

This discussion concludes the study's recommendations for improving the EFL curriculum in Korean primary schools. The next section offers the study's recommendations for improving the development of primary-school-level KTEs.

The Development of KTEs

This section discusses the following five recommendations for improving the development of primary-school-level KTEs: (1) adopt a "client-centered" approach to professional training; (2) establish better-specialized professional training; (3) increase material and non-material teacher support; (4) limit overseas training or replace it with domestic training; and (5) discontinue or modify the native-speaking teacher programs. The second, third, and fourth of the above five recommendations have also been suggested by the study participants; the first and the fifth recommendations are the author's own.

Adopt a "client-centered" approach to professional training. It can be recalled from earlier discussions that the pre- and in-service teacher training programs for primary-school-level KTEs do not appear to adequately take into account the opinions of the teachers themselves in organizational decisions regarding their professional development.
Therefore, the study recommends that teacher development programs for KTEs adopt a "client-centered" (Nunan, 1989) approach in which the needs of the classroom teachers form the fundamental basis for the programs.

In addition to the needs of the teachers, this study further recommends that the concept of the above-mentioned "client-centered" approach to teacher training be broadened to include the next logical step: the needs of the students. In a related discussion, Breen et al. (1989), in recounting their experience in conducting a series of teacher-training workshops in Denmark, stated that the focal point of their programs evolved, first from the trainers' unilateral agendas, then to the needs of the teachers, and finally, to the needs of the students. This shift in focus to the language learners and the resulting improvement in the quality of the programs caused the authors to conclude, "Training should encourage a three-way interaction and inter-dependence between trainers, teachers and learners" (p. 135). In comparison, the current pre- and in-service programs for primary-school-level KTEs still appear to be in the first of Breen et al.'s three stages. In short, Korea's EFL teacher training programs should be organized in a way that is ultimately oriented around the needs of the students, and this can best be achieved if the program organizers listen to the teachers, who in turn carefully listen to and observe their students.

Finally, it should be noted that the recommendation for "client-centered" training focuses on the clients' needs, not necessarily their wants. This distinction is important because it may be recalled from chapter four that, for instance, some KTEs believe that "theory" is not as important as "practice" in teacher development. Such a trend indicates a need for better training for EFL teachers, which is the topic of the next discussion.
Establish better-specialized professional training. This study has repeatedly emphasized the need for greater inclusion of KTEs in policy matters regarding primary-school-level EFL education in Korea. However, as Cornett (1991) states, teachers' extended participation in school decision making will have little positive impact unless teachers simultaneously engage in developing their own professional knowledge. Thus, EFL education policies and teacher development should complement each other so that a vicious cycle does not occur: teachers are ineffective policy makers because they are ill-informed, and they are ill-informed because they are ineffective policy makers. Thus, in order to develop true EFL professionals for Korean elementary schools, the study recommends that Korea's pre- and in-service teacher training programs for EFL education should strive to become more professionally specialized.

Recall from earlier discussions that some teachers in the study expressed dissatisfaction with the pre-service training for primary-school-level KTEs.

Universities of education have solid [teacher preparation] programs for education at the primary-school level, but weak TEFL programs; Colleges of education have so-so English [i.e., TEFL] programs, but no programs for primary-school-level education. In-Ja Oh

Thus, the study offers two recommendations, one quantitative and one qualitative, for the pre-service training of KTEs at universities of education. In quantitative terms, the universities should create better-specialized programs for English education majors by substantially increasing the number of major-related credit hours required to obtain a degree in the major. In qualitative terms, the course offering should be tailored to the
needs of the teachers and, more importantly, their students. For example, in addition to the currently offered courses such as teaching methodology, introductory-level linguistics, and “English conversation,” courses that are more specialized, such as SLA (second language acquisition), testing/assessment, action/classroom research, and language teaching policy should be offered. Thus, it can be seen that the proposed quantitative and qualitative reforms are inter-related, in the sense that the qualitative improvements necessitate a quantitative increase.

Another possibility for the pre-service training of primary-school-level KTEs is to establish a dual-track English education program at colleges of education – which, compared to universities of education, already have more specialized English education programs – with one track for primary-school teachers-to-be, and another one for secondary-school teachers-to-be. However, considering the extremely strong competition for jobs between groups with vested interests in universities of education versus those with vested interests in colleges of education, this proposal probably does not have much possibility of being actualized.

Regarding the in-service training programs, the study recommends that the various suggestions offered by the study participants (see chapter four) be given serious consideration. In particular, suggestions for on-going training, flexible training, multi-level training, better integration of theory and practice, and better intra- and inter-program coordination offer excellent possibilities for the better-specialized in-service training of KTEs.

Lastly, it is obvious to say that, other things being equal, teachers who are knowledgeable about their profession are better equipped to teach than those who are not.
Lafayette (1993) argues that what teachers know about subject-matter content influences how they teach. Buchmann (1984) believes that a lack of content knowledge leads to a lack of teacher self-assurance, which in turn may cause teachers to maintain classrooms in which their attention is focused primarily on maintaining social control and teacher authority. Thus, for EFL learning to be student-centered in Korean schools, where social control and teacher authority is already pervasive, the KTEs should receive more and better specialized training.

Increase material and non-material teacher support. Schrier (1993), based on recommendations from the Carnegie Task Force (1986) and the Holmes Group (1986), argues that the following four conditions are necessary for the creation of a positive environment for “professional” teachers:

1. Salary scales and career structures must be sufficiently competitive with most alternative occupations open to college graduates.

2. Teaching must include and reward high levels of autonomy and decision-making responsibility with opportunity for advancement or variability in job functions. These are important to professionals who value opportunities for growth, challenge, and change in their work.

3. There must be increased community regard for the occupation of teaching.

4. Attractive working conditions with respect to physical facilities, access to office space and equipment, and opportunity for collegial exchange must be created (p. 116)

The current study has concluded that all four of Schrier’s above conditions may have implications for the context of Korean primary-school-level EFL education. In short, the
study recommends that the primary-school-level KTEs receive greater material as well as non-material support, from the government, school administrators (e.g., principals), the public, and their colleagues, as discussed below.

It should be noted that, although several of the study participants mentioned the problem of low morale among teachers, none of them cited low pay as a source of discontent. However, as was discussed earlier, several of the participants did mention the wish to have financial support from the government for private study and overseas training. The teachers in the study also mentioned their wish for support from the administrators at their schools, support manifested by the administrators’ continued interest in EFL education, granting of professional autonomy to the KTEs, and financial backing (e.g., to buy supplementary teaching materials). The teachers in the study also wished for greater community support and understanding for their profession and themselves. The public should remember that teachers are not its adversaries; it should realize that communities and teachers share something very important in common: they both value the best interests of the school children. As mentioned in the previous chapter, conflicts often exist — though not always in obvious ways — between dam-im teachers and jun-dam teachers. Several jun-dam teachers in the study have stated that they often felt subtly ostracized; several dam-im teachers have stated that they resent the presence of jun-dam teachers in their schools. Such feelings of ostracism are likely to affect the morale of the jun-dam teachers as well as having a negative effect on the overall relationship among colleagues. Whether done deliberately or not, it appears that many jun-dam teachers of English feel that they are not being fully accepted by their dam-im colleagues. Thus, the schools and the dam-im teachers need to be made aware of the
implications of this problem, and the schools and the dam-im teachers should strive to embrace the jun-dam teachers as colleagues. Clearly, conflicts between the jun-dam and the dam-im teachers benefit no one. At the risk of stating the obvious, there must be cooperation and understanding between the two groups of teachers, initiated by open dialogues.

Limit overseas training or replace it with domestic training. It may be recalled from chapter four that the MOE recently announced that, from 2002 through 2005, it will send abroad a total of 260 primary- and secondary-level teachers of foreign languages for two-year study programs (in Cho, 2001b). Recall also that the government’s projected financial outlay per teacher is 157,100,000 won (approximately 120,000 U.S. dollars at the time of this writing). In place of the government’s current plans for the study abroad program, this study recommends three other options: totally replacing the study abroad program with domestic training programs, replacing the two-year program for 260 teachers with a four-year program for 130 teachers, or a combination of the first two options.

Regarding the first option, this study recommends that, instead of sending 260 teachers abroad for two years each, it may be preferable to offer training in domestic post-graduate programs (e.g. graduate programs or certification programs), which, for the same amount of money, would enable many more teachers to obtain post-graduate training. To illustrate this proposal, currently in Korea (albeit only in the Seoul area), there are graduate-level certification programs in TESOL at several prominent private universities. The duration of such programs are typically five months in length, and the
programs offer such courses as EFL teaching methods, second language acquisition, and cross-cultural comparisons. The tuition at two prominent programs, Suk-Myung Women’s University and Sunkyunkwan University, for the fall term in 2001 was 3 million won and 3.1 million won, respectively (at the time of this writing, 3 million won is approximately equal to 2,300 U.S. dollars). In a somewhat simplified but telling case, the government should consider whether it is better to train one teacher overseas for two years at the cost of 120,000 dollars or, for the same amount of money, train 52 teachers domestically for five months.

The rationale for the second option is as follows. The Korean government should support the development of educational leaders in the field of TEFL, for example, by supporting promising scholars for overseas study. In other words, if overseas training is to continue, rather than supporting the development of, for example, 260 people for two years each towards a master’s degree, it may be preferable to train 130 people for four years each towards a doctoral degree. This is because 130 doctoral degree holders returning to Korea could make a significant contribution to the nation’s foreign language education, by, for instance, taking leadership roles in the development of foreign-language teachers. On the other hand, 260 master’s degree holders, while not a negligible number, would not likely make as significant an impact as 130 doctoral degree holders. (It should also be remembered that the 260 teachers are to come from the ranks of both primary- and secondary-level schools, so the number of teachers returning to the primary level will be substantially less than 260.) This is because, as classroom teachers, even assuming that all 260 teachers who receive the master’s degree training will return to teach at the primary schools (but, of course, many of the 260 will teach not at the
primary-level but at the secondary-level), the number is not nearly sufficient to staff the nearly 6,000 public primary schools in Korea. (As of 1997, there were 5,645 public primary schools in Korea (MOE, 2001).)

In sum, the government's current plan is "neither here nor there." The 260 people who receive the two-year overseas training may well become very qualified teachers, but that number is grossly insufficient to make any meaningful impact at the national level. On the other hand, with only two years of graduate-level training, they would not likely be given much opportunity – by the very government that sent them to the training in the first place – to assume leadership roles such as teacher trainers. Either way, although the teachers may benefit personally from the overseas training opportunity, their training will probably not make significant impact at the national level.

The third option is a combination of the first two. In other words, there is no reason to make an either/or decision; the two options can be flexibly combined. It is the study's conclusion that any of the three options proposed here is superior to the current plans by the government.

**Discontinue or modify the native-speaking teacher programs.** Through programs such as the EPIK (English Program in Korea), the MOE has in place and plans to continue to have NESTs (native English-speaking teachers) teaching in the Korean public schools. However, this study recommends that the practice of recruiting NESTs as classroom teachers be discontinued or modified.

There are three main reasons for recommending the discontinuation of recruiting NESTs as classroom teachers in Korean elementary schools: there is no empirical
evidence showing that the inclusion of NESTs in the Korean EFL classrooms has significantly contributed to student learning; on the other hand, there is evidence that many of the NESTs in Korean schools are problematic teachers; not only are NESTs questionable short-term solutions, but they are clearly not good long-term investments for Korean education. The three reasons are explained below in greater detail.

First, Phillipson (1992) talks about the “native speaker fallacy,” the major tenet of which is that “the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker” (p. 185). Despite growing criticisms against the fallacy (e.g., Braine, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Medgyes, 1992, 1994, 1999), the MOE plans to continue to recruit NESTs as EFL teachers for Korean classrooms. In fact, research findings (Ahn et al., 1998; Chun, 2001) do not support the assumption that the inclusion of NESTs in Korean schools has resulted in a significant contribution to student learning.

Second, studies have found that the school systems in Korea in which NESTs were employed often experienced problems due to the NESTs’ personal/professional behavior: personal problems such as alcohol dependency, and professional problems such as general inexperience in teaching (Ahn et al., 1998; Chun, 2001).

Lastly, even if it were found that NESTs do significantly help improve student learning in Korean schools, the financial cost of employing NESTs in numbers that would result in their sufficient distribution nation-wide would be prohibitive. (Recall that, as of 1997, there were 5,645 public elementary schools in Korea (MOE, 2001).) Furthermore, it is highly unrealistic to think that a sufficient number of qualified NESTs could be continually recruited and retained to adequately staff the schools nation-wide. In any case, the issues of financial cost and recruitment/retention of NESTs are not decisive
problems in and of themselves, since EFL teachers – whether NESTs or KTEs – must staff the schools in any event. The main problem with most NESTs, even those who are well-qualified, is that most of them do not consider their work in Korea to be permanent; for many of them, their work in Korea is something they will do until they secure a more desirable job in their native countries. As a result, only a small fraction of the government money spent on recruiting, training, and paying the NESTs results in the long-term retention of experienced EFL teachers for Korean schools. In other words, the current system can be compared to pouring money down a drain, because the fruits of the financial investments in the NESTs do not accumulate for the long-term in Korea, at least not to the extent they would if such an investment were to be concentrated on the development of KTEs, who are much more likely to consider their jobs to be long-term.

The recommendation to discontinue the current NEST programs is relevant only for the recruitment of classroom teachers. It was not to say that foreign professionals should not be recruited at all. The study recommends that the NEST programs be modified so that, instead of recruiting classroom teachers, the recruitment efforts focus on attracting highly qualified professionals, even if in much smaller numbers than now, who can directly or indirectly assist KTEs, for example, as policy advisors, researchers, and teacher trainers.

In sum, for the reasons stated above, this study suggests that the Korean government discontinue or modify the NEST programs such as the EPIK. In their place, it is suggested that resources be used for the long-term development of KTEs.
Summary

Based on the themes that emerged in the study, eleven recommendations pertaining primarily to the curriculum and teacher development have been offered for improving the EFL education in Korean elementary schools. The next section offers directions for future research.

Directions for Future Research

Inevitably, practical constraints of time and material resources dictate that limitations be placed on the scope of any research endeavor, and this study was no exception. While the study contributed to new understandings in the field of foreign/second language education, particularly for primary-school-level EFL education in Korea, there are many other directions for further research that would complement this study. The following presents some of the more urgent research agendas.

The participants in the current study were limited to teachers. However, it would also be informative to learn the opinions of other groups of people with vested interests in EFL education in Korean elementary schools. For example, the voices of parents of school children, the school children themselves, political bureaucrats, and school administrators are also promising sources of insights regarding EFL education in Korea.

In addition, other forms of qualitatively oriented studies are also recommended for future studies. For example, ethnographic studies – both short- and long-term – of individual KTEs and classroom observations promise valuable information.

Furthermore, the participants in the current study were teachers in urban areas. It would also be informative to conduct comparative studies about the status of English
education in rural areas of Korea, especially in demographically poor areas, since the resulting findings would likely suggest implications for equity issues.

Additionally, the results of this study could be used to conduct follow-up studies that have a narrower but generalizable research scope. In other words, research that utilizes inferential statistics could be conducted to refine and complement the particular aspects of the themes that emerged in this study.

Finally, the current study focused on primary-school-level EFL education. It would be informative to conduct parallel studies for EFL education at middle- and high-school levels.

Conclusion

This study was significant if for no other reason than because it is the first one to allow primary-school-level KTEs to speak freely for themselves regarding their profession. Furthermore, it has been claimed that, compared to general education, there has been relatively little research on formal ESL/EFL education of children in primary schools (Williams, 1995). This study has contributed, albeit in a small way, to this pool of literature.

In closing, it should be remembered that the EFL education in Korean elementary schools is in a transitional period, from infancy towards adolescence. As in most complex, large-scale endeavors, the program will need time to develop into maturity. It is hoped that, however challenging the development process may be, those who have a vested interest in EFL education in Korea answer the moral call to provide the very best of life.
to the school children, because, as James Agee said in Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.

"In every child who is born, under no matter what circumstances, and of no matter what
parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again."
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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APPENDIX A: SURVEY (ENGLISH VERSION)

The Status of EFL Education in Korean Public Elementary Schools:
From the Teachers' Perspective

Part One: Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to provide teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Korean elementary schools a forum in which to voice their thoughts and beliefs regarding EFL education in Korean elementary schools. Too often, in matters relating to educational policy-making in Korea, the voices of the teachers are not heard, or heard very faintly. In an effort to address this shortcoming, Dong-Hoon Lee, a doctoral candidate majoring in Foreign/Second Language Education at The Ohio State University, intends to do the following. First, teachers will be provided with a forum – through this survey and interviews – in which they can freely express their thoughts and beliefs regarding EFL education in Korean elementary schools, particularly about issues regarding the EFL curriculum and teacher development. Next, papers that clearly articulate the teachers' voices will be presented and published in academic and non-academic media.
Part Two: Consent for Participation in Research

I consent to participating in research entitled: "The Status of EFL Education in Korean Public Elementary Schools: From the Teachers' Perspective."

Dr. Keiko Samimy, the principal investigator, or Dong-Hoon Lee, her authorized co-investigator, has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described, as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me. I understand that complete anonymity will be maintained throughout and beyond the time of this study.

I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

I would ___ / would not ___ like to participate in interviews with Dong-Hoon Lee at a later time.

I can be reached at the following contact numbers:

Telephone: ________________________________

Email: ________________________________
Part Three: Demographic Information

Please fill out the personal information below. The information will be used only for purposes directly related to this study. All responses are confidential.

1. Age: ___________________

2. Sex: ____________________

3. Name of school where you currently teach: ___________________

4. Years of EFL teaching experience: ___________________

5. EFL-related training received:

   A. University:
      
      Name of university ____________________________
      
      Year of graduation ____________________________
      
      Major ________________________________
B. Other (For example: In-service training):

Name of training. Period of training (i.e., month/date/year)

E.g. Pusan city elementary school in-service training. 07/28/98 – 08/21/98

Part Four: The Survey

Please take some time to consider deeply the following seven questions about EFL education in Korean elementary schools, then respond freely to each of the questions. Try to be as specific as possible in what you say. You may attach additional sheets of paper if you need more writing space or if you would like to type your responses.

Questions:

1-A. What have been the successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the success be attributed?

1-B. What have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects of the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?
1-C. What should be done to improve the EFL curriculum in Korean public elementary schools?

2-A. Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the successful aspects? To what factors can the success be attributed?

2-B. Regarding the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools, what have been the unsuccessful or less successful aspects? To what factors can the lack of success be attributed?

2-C. What should be done to improve the professional development of pre- and in-service KTEs in Korean public elementary schools?

3. Other than what you’ve stated so far, is there anything else you want to say about EFL education in Korea, whether or not it is related to elementary schools?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

[In the actual survey, five additional sheets of lined paper were provided. The additional sheets are not included here, for the sake of saving space.]
APPENDIX B: SURVEY (KOREAN VERSION)

국 공립 초등학교 영어과 담당 교사들에 관한 연구:
교사들의 관점 중심으로

1. 서론
본 연구의 주된 목적이, 현재 실시되고 있는 초등학교 영어 수업에 대한
한국인 영어 담당 선생님들의 숙직한 의견을 바탕으로 한국에서의 초등학교
영어교육 체계와 질을 개선시키는데 있습니다. 주지하시다시피, 한국의 교육 정책
결정 과정에서 현직 교사들의 목소리는 대부분의 경우, 전혀 혹은 거의 반영되지
않는 것이 한국의 교육 현실입니다. 이러한 문제점을 직시하고 이를 극복하기 위해,
본 연구를 행함에 있어서 다음과 같은 사항에 주의를 기울였습니다.

우선, 현재 한국에서 실시되고 있는 초등학교 영어 교육에 대해, 특별히
초등영어교육의 교과과정과 교사양성 분야에 대해, 현장에서 수업을 담당하고
계신 선생님들의 의견과 신념이 최대한 자유롭게 반영 될 수 있도록 했습니다.

또한, 선생님 개개인이 자유롭게 개진한 응답을 바탕으로 논리 정연하고
정약적으로 잘 정리된 본 연구의 결과는, 학문적인 영역 뿐 아니라 관련 있는 여러
매체를 통해 발간될 것임을 약속드립니다. 선생님의 진지하고 성의 있는 참여를
부탁드립니다.

이동훈
외국어 및 제2언어 교육학 박사과정
미국 오하이오 주립 대학
현 부산대학교 영어 교육원 객원 교수
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Ⅱ. 연구 참여 동의서

본인은 '국, 공립 초등학교 영어과 담당 교사들에 관한 연구: 교사들의 관점을 중심으로' 제하의 본 연구에 참여하기를 동의합니다. 본인은 본 연구의 책임자인 게이코 사미미 박사, 연구자 이동훈, 혹은 이들로부터 위임받은 공동 연구원을 통하여, 상기 연구와 관련한 연구목적, 연구과정, 그리고 연구참여시 예상되는 소요시간 등에 대한 충분한 설명을 들었습니다. 또한, 본 연구의 과정이 응용되고 유용하게 적용될 경우의 바람직한 교육효과에 대해서도 잘 알고 있습니다.

본인은 본 연구에 참여하면서 본 연구와 관련한 의문점에 대해서 추가 질문의 기회를 가졌으며 그 질문에 대한 만족스런 답을 들을 기회가 있었습니다. 그리고 본인이 원할 경우에는 연구과정의 어느 시점에서라도 본 연구에 참여하지 않을 수 있음을 알고 있습니다. 또한, 본 연구가 연구의 진행 과정과 또한 연구가 끝난 이후의 어떠한 경우에도 본인의 이름이 익명으로 유지될 것을 전제로 참여하는 것임을 알고 있습니다.

본인은 상기의 연구참여 동의서를 충분히 읽고 이해하였으며, 주어진 문서에 서명함으로써 자발적으로 본 연구에 동참할 것을 동의합니다.

본인은 차후 편리한 시간에, 본 연구를 위한 연구자의 인터뷰에 응할 의사가 있습니다. __________ 없습니다. __________

연락처
전화: ____________________
E-mail: ____________________

서명: ____________________
날짜: ____________________

서명: ____________________  증인: ____________________
(연구자 혹은 위임 받은 연구자)
Ⅲ. 신상 명세서

선생님의 신상에 관한 아래 질문들에 답해 주십시오. 아래 정보들은 본 연구목적으로만 사용될 것이며 절대 비밀에 두쳐질 것임을 다시 한 번 강조해 드립니다.

1. 연령: ________세
2. 성별: 남: ________ 여: ________
3. 현재 근무하고 있는 학교명: ________초등학교
4. 영어 수업 년수: ________년 ________개월
5. 영어 수업과 관련한 연수
   A. 출신 대학(교)
      대학(교) 이름: ______________________
      졸업 연도: __________년
      전공 과목: ______________________
   B. 기타 (예: 영어 수업 관련 연수)
      연수 제목, 연수 기간 (월/일/년 - 월/일/년)
      예: 부산 교육청 초등학교 영어과 실화 과정, 07/28/98 - 08/21/98

   ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________

Ⅳ. 설문

초등학교 영어 수업에 대한 아래의 질문 질문들을 주의 깊게 읽으시고, 각각의 질문들에 대해 최대한 자유롭게 답해 주시기를 바랍니다. 가능한 구체적으로 답해 주십시오. 혹 답변 공간이 부족하시면 여분의 용지에 쓰셔서
함께 제출해서도 좋습니다.

1-A. 현재 실시되고 있는 한국 초등학교 영어 교육 교과과정의 어떤 점이 성공적이라고 생각하십니까?

1-B. 현재 실시되고 있는 한국 초등학교 영어 교육 교과과정의 어떤 점이 문제가 있거나 성공적이지 못하다고 생각하십니까?

1-C. 현재 실시되고 있는 한국 초등학교 영어 교육 교과과정의 개선을 위해 어떤 일들을 해야만 한다고 생각하십니까?

2-A. 한국 초등학교 영어교사 양성과 영어교사 재교육과 관련해서 어떤 점이 성공적이라고 생각하십니까? 성공의 요인은 무엇이라고 생각하십니까?

2-B. 한국 초등학교 영어교사 양성과 영어교사 재교육과 관련해서 어떤 점이 성공적이지 못하다고 생각하십니까? 성공적이지 못한 요인은 무엇이라고 생각하십니까?

2-C. 한국 초등학교 영어교사 양성과 영어교사 재교육과 관련해서 어떤 일들을 해야만 한다고 생각하십니까?

3. 지금까지 언급하신 내용 이외에, 초등학교 영어 교육을 포함한 한국의 전반적인 영어 교육에 대해서 선생님이 가지고 계신 의견을 자유롭게 말씀해 주십시오.
APPENDIX C: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY

PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Years of EFL Teaching</th>
<th>Academic Major in College</th>
<th>Training in TEFL (Hours)</th>
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Note: BI = basic in-service; AI = advanced in-service; EC = English conversation in-service; ESP = English as a special program in-service; STET = supplementary training for jun-dam EFL teachers; SNP = school-visiting native-speaker program; N/A = not available.
APPENDIX D: A SAMPLE EXCERPT FROM INTERVIEWS WITH A STUDY PARTICIPANT (TRANSLATED FROM KOREAN TO ENGLISH)

Some background information should first be given for this appendix. The following dialogue between Mi-Ra Oh and me, the interviewer, is actually an excerpt from a series of four email exchanges that occurred over a period of approximately two months in 2001. We decided to maintain contact by email because Mi-Ra and I lived in different cities at the time. We had already had several face-to-face conversations — not interviews, per se; mostly chats to get to know each other better — prior to the email exchanges, and by the time the email exchanges began, Mi-Ra had become my closest informant. As can be seen by the tone of the following dialogue, the two of us had already become fairly familiar with each other.

It should also be noted that the dialogue has been edited in order to present it in a form that is more coherent and focused than the original content. That is, it was felt that the original transcripts contained numerous digressions as well as very long on-topic monologues that decreased the coherence and focus of what must necessarily here be a representative, yet succinct, sample of a greater body of text. Thus, most of the digressions have been removed (a few of the short ones have been kept to help show the overall tone of the exchanges), and lengthy monologues have been shortened. Throughout the editing process, however, an attempt was made to maximally preserve not only the words but the spirit of the original transcripts.

Don: I hope you've been well, Mi-Ra. I want to thank you very much for your wonderful responses to the survey questions. I really appreciate your help with my study. In re-reading your responses, though, I had a question about something you said. In your response, you said, "Even we teachers
don’t trust the education system for our own children’s education.” Could you say more about this?

Mi-Ra Oh: I’m sorry that you have a bad cold. The sicker one is, the more one gets homesick. From 1995 to 1998, I illegally tutored two students; it was illegal because, at the time, only college students, including graduate students, could legally tutor students for money. I taught a male middle-school student and a female student, and the male student’s mother was a teacher in a public middle school. At the time, the male student was also receiving separate private tutorials in mathematics. . . . I think his mother knew well that her son could not stay at the top level among his peers with just in-school study. Many teachers think that it’s hard to get into college with just in-school education. I also think that. I’m embarrassed to hear that you re-read my survey. On Saturday, some teachers will go to Pusan to attend the conference. Can you come?

Don: I’m debating whether or not to attend Saturday’s conference. I have some personal reasons to consider. Your last email with the baby pictures was pretty funny. By the way, I have a question that maybe you know the answer to. As you know, according to the Seventh National Curriculum, the time for the study of English in Korean elementary schools has been reduced from two periods to one period in grades three and four. Do you know the reason for this decrease?

Mi-Ra Oh: According to the Seventh National Curriculum, it’s not just the study time for English that decreased. The study time for English decreased by one
hour in grades three and four; the same for math in grades five and six; social studies, grades five and six; natural science, grades four, five, and six; wise living, grades one and two; happy living, grade two; and home economics. The reason for the decrease was that, to lessen the burden of schoolwork for teachers and students, the minimum amount of study time per subject and grade has been reduced or adjusted. The schools can implement the curriculum with flexibility, and, to my knowledge, I don’t know of any school that is teaching English for more than one hour [in grades three and four].

Don: Thanks for the great info. I have a follow-up question, then. If the class times have been reduced, what are the students – and the teachers – doing with the freed-up time?

Mi-Ra Oh: The time for “student activities according to individual teacher’s discretion” has increased. There are five types of these activities – “self-study,” “adaptation,” “development,” “public service,” and “special activities” – and each school can independently implement these activities. At our school, we have student discussion groups, club activities, and one teacher teaches students how to play the recorder [a flute-like musical instrument]. I’ve got detailed information about this in a book, and if you need it, I can tell you more about it after I get home, or maybe you would like the book.

Don: . . . Anthrax was discovered in Kansas City today, which is pretty close to where my parents live. In fact, I used to live in KC, and I still have friends
and family there. I hope you’re doing OK. You don’t have to answer this if you don’t want to: Are you a regular—a not temporary—teacher at your school? I’m sorry to take so much of your time, but I like to ask you questions because your answers are always helpful.

Mi-Ra Oh: I hope all’s well with you and your loved ones in the USA. From September 1999 to August 2000, while I was working at Suh-Ryung Elementary School as a contracted [i.e., temporary] full-time English teacher, I received additional training, took a teacher certification examination in August 2000, and thereafter became a regular teacher. I received 1,008 hours of training at the university of education nearest my home, and it cost me two million won [approximately 1,500 U.S. dollars, which is equal to about twice the amount of this teacher’s basic monthly pay]. . . . Anyway, I learned the gist things; I learned in one year and three months what the students at universities of education learn in four years. I worked during the day and commuted to the university, and I’d get home at midnight. . . . Some teachers who started the process dropped out, for various reasons, including health reasons. . . . I have English bible study this Sunday with a Canadian named Matt. He’s divorced, and he’s 50 years old. If you know of anyone I can fix him up with, let me know.

You’re going to keep your promise of buying me lunch this winter break, aren’t you? Have a nice weekend.