

Classroom Observation of a Korean EFL Teacher's Strategies in Public Elementary School Context: A Case Study

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This study describes the instructional strategies of a Korean public elementary school teacher in carrying out a communication-oriented EFL curriculum. It also examines the extent to which the nature of his teaching practices corresponds to the curricular goals of a proficiency-oriented, functional, and learner-centered language teaching approach. The findings from non-participant observation and interview data show that the participating teacher was exploiting distinctive strategies to enact the given curriculum in spite of his limited experience in and resources for EFL instruction. However, due to his inadequate perception of a communicative language teaching as well as to the managerial issues inherent in authentic classroom context, some aspects of his teaching pattern did not always endorse the curricular objectives as stated. In order to facilitate the implementation process of the curriculum, this study suggests classroom teachers be provided readily with a variety of teaching resources that are eclectically applicable to individual teaching environment. At the same time, teacher education programs should put more emphasis on enabling them to reflect on as well as to continue to revise the design of their lesson and the practicality of their teaching behaviors.

Key words: elementary EFL education, communicative language teaching, curriculum implementation, teaching strategies, classroom interaction

1. Introduction

In view of the evidence that second language acquisition is enhanced when learners are provided with sufficient opportunities to practice the target language in meaningful interactions, it has become apparent in the

field of formal L2 instruction research that not only the extent but the nature of language learning activities is also crucial. Even though there exist some limitations to what a communicative classroom can do to promote high levels of linguistic competence (Spada & Lightbown, 1989), it has been generally accepted that *controlled or focused practices* (i.e., practices that focus learner's attention on discrete linguistic features) might not be as effective as *free practice* or *unfocused performance* (i.e., communicative practices focusing on an exchange of information leading to both student participation and interactional modification (Ellis, 1988).

The role of classroom participants has been redefined as well. An L2 teacher as a facilitator of students' learning process is now regarded as an essential element in a communicative classroom environment (Gass & Varonis, 1994; Long, 1985; Seedhouse, 1999). Accordingly, the expected role of learners has changed. For communicative language learning, learners should become "a negotiator between the self, the learning process, and the object of learning, which emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes" (Breen & Candlin, 1980, p. 110). Therefore, not to mention the term *communicative* itself, much has been discussed in the need for, definition, justification, and benefit of *interactive* (Di Pietro, 1987; Rivers, 1987), *proficiency-oriented* (Brumfit, 1984; Omaggio, 1986), or *learner-centered* (Nunan, 1988) approaches to second language learning and teaching.

Given such prominence of a communicative teaching in the literature, there has also been a shift in classroom teachers' attitudes toward second language instruction. For instance, a survey study (Nunan, 1988) shows that the concept of communicative language teaching is salient among teachers, rating the statements in favor of it (e.g., "the development of fluency is more important than formal aspects of the language system") as *essential use* or *important supplementary use* whereas they considered those statements endorsing the traditional approach as *trivial, incidental use* for the second language classroom.

Yet, in reality, it is often criticized that simulation of a communicative language learning process in a classroom context is not easily attainable (Fillmore, 1982; Nunan, 1989; Rivers, 1987). Nunan (1986) studied a number of so-called communicative classrooms and found that there was very little happening in those classes that could be called communicative language use. As he states elsewhere:

It has been found that not only is there a disparity between the planned curriculum (what the curriculum planners suggest should go on) and the implemented curriculum (what actually goes on), but there are also disparities between what teachers believe happens in class and what actually happens... There is a gap between the rhetoric of the planned curriculum and the reality of the classroom, and that teachers are very often unaware of this gap. (Nunan, 1988, pp. 138-139)

This observation is also in line with the research on language teacher education that has long urged teachers' awareness of such disparity between the research findings and classroom practices (e.g., Fanselow, 1977).

Despite the popularity of the communicative language teaching approach, therefore, it will be less adequate to assess the effect of a particular curriculum or program without close examination of the nature and the context of instructional process within classrooms.

2. The Study

2.1. Background

The Korean elementary EFL curriculum was developed in response to public demands and has been implemented as a core curriculum as of 1997. During its development a great deal of attention was drawn to this curriculum with regard to both theoretical and practical issues including teacher preparation and material development. Nevertheless, as to its current implementation process, only a small number of studies are available (e.g., Jee, 1998). Moreover, as most of those studies are based on less direct data source such as questionnaires and achievement tests, in spite of all the brilliant teaching ideas they suggest, they often lack an objective, detailed account of instructional features that are inherent to natural elementary EFL classroom environment.

Therefore, in order to render reliable evidences for an effective and valid maintenance, evaluation, or any necessary modification of the curriculum, it seems to be an indispensable task for both researchers and curriculum administrators to construct a solid description of classroom lessons. It will also lay a cornerstone for evaluative studies to follow as well as for future research on the development of other EFL curriculums

and programs in Korea.

With this in mind, this study set off with a goal to explore how ordinary classroom teachers in Korean public elementary schools planned and carried out EFL lessons for everyday oral communication skills under non-experimental context. It particularly aimed to examine how they realized the objectives of an externally provided curriculum within local teaching environment.

2.2. Research Questions

The research questions for this study emerged as follows:

(1) To describe EFL teachers' classroom practices:

(a) What learning activities do they typically provide?

(b) How are the activities developed, and how do they interrelate within the entire lesson?

(2) To determine the extent to which the EFL lessons reflect the curricular goals set by the Korean Ministry of Education:

(a) What type of language skills are taught, and to what extent?

(b) What aspects of instructional content are emphasized?

(c) What type of classroom participation structure do teachers emphasize, and to what extent do they promote students' active participation during classroom interaction?

2.3. Participant

With an attempt to depict an ordinary elementary EFL classroom environment found in Korea as much as possible, the participating teacher was sought among public school teachers. Students' socio-economic backgrounds, prior learning experience and resources in EFL at home, parental concerns and involvement, and other variables that might influence students' EFL learning process should be minimized. For this purpose, 110 elementary school teachers were contacted who all worked in the small cities near one of the largest metropolitan areas in southern Korea.

Next, the demographic data of these teachers were examined in terms of age, years of teaching young students, English proficiency, and training and teaching experience in EFL so as to find the most typical teacher

type found in the region. Then, the purpose and procedure of the research were explained to all eligible teachers, and only four of them agreed to take part in the multiple-case study. However, because of the nature and amount of descriptive analyses involving an ethnographic approach, the present paper reports on only one case of the teacher whose EFL lessons were considered by the other participants as the most skillful enactment of the given curriculum.

The teacher, age 43, had approximately 15 years of teaching experience at public elementary schools and he was teaching the third grade students during the study. Although his competence and training in EFL teaching was limited like many other Korean EFL teachers, he had been preparing himself for the recently developed curriculum for his concern with EFL instruction. In addition to attending official training programs, he had studied English privately for the past few years and made occasional visits to the model lessons presented by a few EFL teachers in the region. There were 36 students in his class and, as they were assigned at random, their academic or social aptitude was not to be significantly different from those in other third grade classes in the school.

2.4. Data Collection and Analytical Procedures

Non-participant observation was the primary method of data collection. While the researches was taking field notes, all the observation sessions were videotaped with a personal camcorder, which facilitated accurate analyses of the overlapping interactions occurring in a large class. For any information that might not have been captured on the videotape, all the teaching materials and supplements used for the observed lessons were collected as well. Furthermore, as an additional source of data triangulation, informal interviews with the teacher were conducted both before and after each session.

The participating teacher was visited a few times during EFL as well as other subject lessons both prior to the observation period and between each observation session. This way, he and his students became familiar with the presence of a visitor and recording devices. Formal observations were conducted at the beginning (mid April), before the summer vacation (early July), and by the end of the school year (mid December) in order to capture any possible change in the teacher's instructional

pattern at different stages of curricular sequences. Although the teacher was contacted before each observation session, he was not informed of the exact date and time of the visit.

Once the data were collected, the videotapes were transcribed into written documents and then probed along with other data sources. To address the research questions for characterizing the features of the participating teacher's EFL lesson, all the activities in each lesson were identified, categorized, and then cross-examined to find an instructional pattern, if any. It was also explored how the teacher typically proceeded his lesson at different phases (i.e., warm-up, presentation, practice, expansion, and closing). Next, the instructional strategies he deployed to unfold each type of lesson activity were reviewed in light of its frequency, duration, order, and arrangement pattern within an entire lesson. In addition, teacher's as well as students' behaviors, both verbal and non-verbal, were examined closely so as to provide concrete evidence for such strategies. Then, by comparing the patterns of lesson organization the teacher showed over time, the instructional model he was taking into each type of activity and eventually to an EFL lesson was sought.

For those questions to examine the extent of curricular orientation of EFL instruction, the teaching activities were analyzed in terms of *language skill*, *instructional content*, and *participant organization* for which subcategories were adapted from those for 'student modality', 'content,' and 'participant organization' respectively of the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) scheme¹⁾ (for further description of COLT, see Appendix A).

The category of *language skill* specifies the main skill(s) students practice during a classroom activity: 'listening,' 'speaking,' 'listening and speaking,' or other skills 'not related to EFL' skills such as drawing and acting. The subject matter of the activities was described under *instructional content*: 'form' for explicit focus on grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation; 'function' for explicit focus on the meaning or illocutionary acts such as requesting and apologizing at a sentence level; 'discourse' for explicit focus on the way sentences combine into cohesive

1) The COLT system was originally developed by Allen, Frolich, and Spada (1984) with an initial purpose that is similar to the goals of the present study, i.e., "to measure the extent to which an instructional treatment may be characterized as communicatively oriented" (Frolich, Spada, & Allen, 1985).

and coherent sequences such as dialogues; 'sociolinguistic' for explicit focus on making utterances appropriate in particular and contexts; and 'discipline' and 'procedure' for the statements with managerial purpose; 'other than language' for the subject matter of class apart from explicit focus on language and management. *Participant organization* indicates the pattern of participation during an activity: 't-centered' for the interaction between teacher and individual students or the whole class; 'students-centered' for student- to-student or student-to-class interaction; 'choral' for choral work repeating a model provided by the text material or teacher; and 'group/pair' for group or pair interaction.

In addition, it was investigated how the way the teacher interacted with students contributed to the accomplishment of pedagogical goals he was pursuing within each activity as well as toward the curricular objectives. Particular attention was paid to the nature of the interactions around teacher's questions and the feedbacks given to students' responses and voluntary participation, and to the degree of students' control in the topic and form of EFL expressions.

2.4. Limitations of the Study

Being a descriptive and exploratory study, this study used the non-participant observation method which served to portray the reality of classroom teaching practices that otherwise might not have been accessible. At the same time, however, such method itself imposed some inherent limitations on the study. In particular, regarding the selection of the participant, one might argue that this study isn't fully representative of ordinary yet diverse classroom situations in Korean elementary schools. Due to classroom teachers' unfamiliarity with and reluctant attitude to the ethnographic research method, the number of potential participants were extremely small. For the same reason, the frequency of observation had to be reduced than was originally planned. For the teachers who were the teachers rarely observed by people other than school authority personnel, it must have been a burdensome challenge to be tape-recorded for an extended period of time. Although it was never intended for this study to ultimately generalize the results from the participating teacher and his classroom to others nationwide, it would have been more informative if the data were gathered from more participants with different traits as well as from variant teaching contexts.

3. Analyses

3.1. Instructional Strategies in the Use of Activities

3.1.1 Lecture

The teacher utilized a lecturing activity the most frequently and for the largest portion of his lesson time, 42.59% on the average (see Table 1). During the first and third observation, the amount of time spent on lectures exceeded that on student practice activities or games, the second most popular activity type in each lesson, by more than double (38.86% vs. 17.54% and 54.70% vs. 19.32%).

Table 1. Activity Use in EFL Lessons

Type of Activity	Lesson #1	Lesson #2	Lesson #3	Average
Lecture	38.86%	34.21%	54.70%	42.59%
Look & Listen	13.52%	16.70%	6.77%	12.33%
Listen & Repeat	5.93%	7.22%	10.92%	8.02%
Student Practice	17.54%	23.61%	0%	13.72%
Games	4.06%	10.68%	19.32%	11.35%
Song	4.67%	0%	1.81%	2.16%
TPR	5.28%	4.85%	3.70%	4.61%
Other ²⁾	10.15%	2.72%	2.78%	5.21%

First of all, this teacher taught every EFL expression used in each lesson very thoroughly at an early stage of lesson and once he allowed students' independent practice later in the lesson, he seldom needed to provide further instruction. More specifically, he spent at least 3 to 7 minutes simply to introduce new vocabulary items and provide contextual information regarding the main expressions of the lesson. These activities in fact turned out to be the longest lectures observed in every session. For instance, while eliciting the word *elephant* from students, he presented the corresponding textbook illustration on an overhead projector and asked several questions such as the followings to help them examine the picture more carefully and draw on the information related to the lesson theme:

2) Time spent looking for teaching materials, searching video clips, and so on.

“이 그림에서 무엇이 보입니다?”,

What do you see in this picture?

“몇 명의 아이들이 무엇을 하고 있습니까?”,

How many children do you see in this picture and what are they doing?

“여기는 어디일까요?”,

What room is this?

“뭐가 빠져있지?”

What do you think is missing?

The participating teacher's emphasis on early but comprehensive lecturing style became apparent again when he taught the first textbook dialogue of each lesson. As soon as students watched and repeated the first sentence after a native speaker, he interrupted the video clip for one or two minutes in order to check students' comprehension and explain the meaning, grammar, and pronunciation of the sentence.³⁾ He then resumed the video clip only to introduce the next sentence of the interaction, which was again followed by his lecture. Thus, by the time he finished introducing the entire dialogue, the teacher had already alternated his activities between Listen & Repeats and Lectures at least 3 times (the first and second sessions) or as often as 6 times (the third session).

His lectures were further extended as he made a consistent use of small objects and visual aids, implying his concern for increasing students' interest. It was also a part of his efforts to create an appropriate context for target EFL expressions. For instance, to review the expression, *What's this?*, he not only brought in the items stated in the textbook (e.g., ball, doll) but also several other stationary items of which English name were taught during the previous lesson (e.g., pencil, pen, pencil sharpener, eraser, etc.). Moreover, by bringing those in a covered shoe box and making students guess the name of objects inside he easily elevated students' curiosity and interest during this lecture.⁴⁾ Similarly, as

3) This made an apparent contrast with the other teachers observed in the original study who either gave their explanation of key expressions of the day or waited until students finished repeating entire dialogues after the videotape.

a brainstorming activity before introducing the name of rooms in a house, he made special use of a textbook illustration; in particular, being presented via an overhead projector instead of on the blackboard, this picture seemed to draw students' attention much more.

Calling his students by their English nicknames was another way this teacher made his lectures more effective. Since he used this strategy from the beginning of the year and the students were already familiar with the meaning of nearly forty English nicknames, he could often save Korean translation for new vocabulary items. The following excerpt illustrates one of such occasions.

- (1) 1 Video: Little.
 2 SS: Little.
 3 Video: Little.
 4 SS: Little.
 5 Video: It's a little elephant.
 6 SS: It's a little elephant.
 7 T: (Pauses the videotape)
 Repeat after me. Little. Little.
 8 SS: Little.
 9 T: (Points to a student whose nickname is 'Little Angel')
 What's your name?
 10 S: (Stood up from her seat) My name is Little Angel.
 11 SS: Ah ha!
 12 T: 다시 큰 소리로, 다 같이 물어 보세요. 시작!
 Again, much louder, Ask the question together. Now!
 13 SS: What's your name?
 14 S: My name is Little Angel.
 15 T: (Looking around the class)
 What? What? Little...small... angel.
 작은 천사. 자. 다같이, Little,
 Little angel. Now, together,
 16 SS: Little.

4) In the original study, the same English expressions were taught in two other classrooms. However, those teachers utilized picture cards the most and even when they brought real objects, they simply displayed them before students.

Instead of providing the definition of the new word *little*, the teacher called on a student and asked of her name (line 9). When this student replied, "My name is little angel" (line 10), a few students quickly grasped the meaning of the target word (line 11) since they already knew their classmate who nickname was *little angel*. Yet, for the others, the teacher was highlighting the word *little* by asking the class again of the name of this student (line 12), and then by repeating and paraphrasing it (line 15). Korean translation was provided the last.

Likewise, a moment later in this lesson, this teacher delivered the meaning of *It's an elephant* simply by saying it repeatedly while pointing to the student whose nickname was *elephant*. Such use of this sentence would have been inappropriate if it had occurred in another situation; however, it seemed perfectly meaningful to the students in this class. As the lesson reached the phase to rehearse *big bear* and *little bear*, the teacher was again able to save explicit translation with a simple question, "Where is bear?" to look for the student named so.

3.1.2. Look & Listen and Listen & Repeat

In terms of the lesson time, the way this teacher utilized video materials was not particularly distinctive. Whenever possible, he attempted to introduce all of the video clips provided, and occasionally chants were presented twice if time allowed; 12.33% of his lesson was spent to 'look & listen' to the video clips and 8.02% to 'listen & repeat' after native speakers.

However, as mentioned earlier in the description of his lecturing strategy, the teacher maintained a strong control over the text materials and used them very strategically. Instead of letting a video clip play an entire dialogue, he made use of its layout as an organizing tool for his instruction in the way to determine the pace of listening activities and lectures according to his lesson plan.

3.1.3. Student Practice and Games

In this class, the activities designed to develop students' fluency appeared noticeably later in the lesson; despite that the teachers' manual normally suggests such activities at a much earlier stage, the participating teacher seldom used one until he finished explaining the last set of textbook dialogue. Furthermore, regardless of its type (i.e., pair drill, role-play presentation, or small group practice), such activities were used very briefly. For instance, during a role-play presentation, he allowed no

more than three pairs of students a turn.

Instead, this teacher tried to adapt several fun activities into his lessons. Not only did he make the most use of the games introduced in the textbook, he also added others. For instance, when the students were seated in groups of six, he made one of them walk around to visit the other members in the group and ask their name as fast as possible. These activities were basically a variation of a typical pair activity. Yet, without burdensome preparation of materials and management problems, the teacher was able to generate easily more motivation and engagement from students. As a result, in comparison with those practices between fixed partners, this modified version of a pair activity increased the extent as well as the intensity of student practice significantly within a limited amount of time.

3.1.4. Songs and Total Physical Response (TPR)

Unlike games, most songs and TPR activities observed in this class served for classroom management purpose. Songs were seldom learned during lesson hours but were usually assigned as homework unless the teacher was left with sufficient lesson time. As the lyrics of a new song were usually the expressions the students studied in class, he reported, they tended to learn it with ease at home. Instead, he attempted to increase the frequency of songs in his teaching by using it as an opening and concluding ritual for his lesson.

Similarly, three out of four TPR activities found during observation were the means to direct students' attention back to the teacher especially during a transitional period between activities (e.g., after a pair work activity followed by watching a videotape segment or between two different lectures). Only once, the teacher utilized TPR as a main activity to teach the key expressions of the day; to introduce the sentence structure of *She is sleeping /walking /singing*, TPR was the best fit.

Yet, even during those disciplinary activities, this teacher had a strategic plan to provide students with additional learning opportunities. That is, while he was freshening up the classroom atmosphere with TPR commands using familiar vocabulary items, he added in a few new words so as to give an ordinary activity a variation and make it more challenging. In doing so, more interestingly, he used one student as a translator, whose English was probably the best in the class. The following excerpt describes such incidence.

- (2) 1 T: Point to the window.
 2 SS: (Some point to the window but others just look at the window)
 3 T: 재섭아, 통역해 줘라.
Jaesup, translate it into Korean.
 4 Jaesup: (says loudly) 손가락으로 창문을 가리켜라.
Point to the window with your finger.
 5 SS: (Everybody points to the window)
 6 T: Good. Excellent. Point to the door.
 7 SS: (Point to the door)
(Teacher gives a few more commands that start with
Point to... and students seem to follow well)
 8 T: Bang your desk four times.
 9 SS: (Bang their desks with their hands)
 10 T: Stomp your foot three times.
 11 SS: (Not able to understand this command and continue
to bang their desks three times. One student does
four times)
 12 T: (calls on the same student in line 4 for translation)
해석해 줘라, 재섭아.
Jaesup, translate it into Korean.
 13 Jaesup: (smiles) 저도 잘 모르겠는데요.
I don't know, either.
 14 T: 아는 사람? Stomp your foot?
Does anyone know?
 15 Sl: 발로 쳐라?
Bang with your foot?
 16 T: 발로! 몇 번? Three times.
With your foot! How many times?
 17 SS: (loudly) 세 번.
Three times.

Whenever his students appeared to have difficulty in following the directions (line 2 and 11), the -teacher called on the student translator first (line 3 and 12) and turned to other students (line 14) only after this student failed (line 13). This strategy seemed to have pushed everyone to look for clues much harder that would lead to an answer. Since it was clear that no one in the class knew the target word including the student

translator, they needed not fear providing a wrong response but felt even more challenged. The post observation interview with the student who eventually provided the answer (line 15) revealed that she indeed deduced her answer after several steps of reasoning process. *Foot*, according to her, was the first clue as it implied that the unknown word *stomp* might mean a behavior people do with their feet. At the same time, she hypothesized that *stomp* was probably another word for *bang* in the line 8, and that *stomp your feet* could be similar behavior as *bang with your foot*.

3.2 Curricular Orientations

3.2.1. Language Skills

The primary goal of most teaching activities observed in this class was to improve students' oral production skills in English. Although the teacher did not seem to be particularly concerned with accuracy in students' pronunciation, more than 60% of the observed lesson time was used for speaking oriented purpose (see Table 2).

Regarding the activities for listening skills, the teacher tried to make full use of the recordings of native speakers' interactions. Typically, about 15% of his lesson was spent watching the video clips; it was almost twice the time that normally takes to present all the videotaped materials, reflecting that the teacher showed all the textbook dialogues and did some of them more than once. However, as illustrated in the following excerpt (3), it was apparent that he did not require great accuracy or a specific task in students' listening comprehension. They were simply encouraged to identify and recall any fragment of the dialogue.

Table 2. The Type of Language Skills Highlighted during Activities

	<u>Lesson #1</u>	<u>Lesson #2</u>	<u>Lesson #3</u>	<u>Average</u>
<i>Listening</i>	14.58%	17.67%	14.36%	15.54%
<i>Speaking</i>	63.95%	62.29%	71.95%	66.03%
<i>Listen&Speak</i>	11.37%	11.11%	10.92%	11.13%
<i>Not related to EFL</i>	10.10%	8.93%	2.76%	7.2%

- (3) 1 Video: It's an elephant.
 2 T: It's an elephant.
 3 SS: It's an elephant.

- 4 T: 뭐라고 그랬지?
What does it say?
- 5 S: Elephant.
- 6 T: 뜻이 뭐죠?
What does it mean?
- 7 S: 코끼리.
Elephant.
- 8 T: It's an elephant.
- 9 S: 한 마리의 코끼리.
One elephant.
- 10 T: 우리말로 쉽게 하면, 코끼리 한 마리가 있다.
Put in plain Korean, it means there is an elephant.

Upon teacher's question to check students' comprehension (line 4), they were not able to provide the complete form of the sentence they not only heard on the video (line 1) but also repeated after their teacher (line 3). When one student managed to recall only a word (line 5), the teacher accepted this response and had her translate it for the class (line 6-7). Again, for another student who cut in quickly and attempted to elaborate this answer (line 9), the teacher rephrased it further into a full sentence (line 10). Similarly, the following excerpt shows how this teacher welcomed and praised (line 9) students' participation, even a single word (line 3).

- (4) 1 T: (Paused the videotape)
 무슨 말인지 알아들은 사람?
Did anyone pick up anything from the dialogue?
- 손들어 보세요.
 Raise your hand.
- 2 SS: 까먹었어요.
I forgot
- 3 T: 까먹었어요? 한 단어라도.
Forgot? Even a word is fine.
- 4 S: 거실.
Living room.
- 5 T: 거실? OK, 또?
Living room? Anything else?

- 6 S: 민지는 자고 있다.
Minji is sleeping.
- 7 T: 민지는 자고 있다. 또?
Minji is sleeping. Anything else?
- 8 S: 민지의 방.
Minji's room.
- 9 T: 민지의 방. 자. 많이 나왔어요.
Minji's room. Good. So many answers.

3.2.2. Focus of Instructional Content

In all the observation sessions, as shown in the Table 3, the participating teacher's main goal of instruction was to prepare students for using English in the form of extended exchange, 'discourse'. On an average, 41.67% of his lesson time was spent for such purpose.

At the same time, in spite of his policy underscoring the place of interaction in a communicative language teaching, it was noticeable that this teacher also spent substantial amount of time relatively on the 'form' of English as a result of his emphasis on vocabulary (23.85%). As long as students mastered all the new vocabulary items, he believed, they would manage to understand sentence-level utterances without explicit explanation or translation. Consequently, whereas he seldom focused on an individual English sentence unless it was a main expression of each lesson (9.84% of COLT category of 'function'), he was willing to spend nearly 6 minutes comparing the concepts of the two words, *big* and *little*.

As for his strategy in fostering students' English vocabulary, he was also eager to introduce a new word himself whenever it was appropriate to do so even though it was not in the textbook's word list. Excerpt (5) exemplifies how he mixed in a new word into the lesson and increased

Table 3. Focus of Instructional Content

	Lesson #1	Lesson #2	Lesson #3	Average
Form	24.18%	34.76%	12.58%	23.83%
Function	5.28%	12.78%	11.47%	9.84%
Discourse	45.80%	42.18%	37.05%	41.67%
Sociolinguistic	0%	7.57%	15.54%	7.71%
Other than Language	0%	0%	23.35%	7.78%
Discipline	0%	0%	0%	0%
Procedure	24.77%	2.72%	0%	9.16%

students' attention.

- (5) 1 T: (Shows a shoe box)
 This box's name is Magic Box. Do you know 'magic'?
 2 SS: (Hesitating) Box.
 3 T: Magic.
 4 SS: Box.
 5 T: Magic 이 무엇을 뜻할까요? TV에서 나왔는데, Magic.
 What does 'magic' mean? We've seen it on TV,
 6 SS: (No responses. Just looked at the teacher)
 7 T: 요술, 요술 box 입니다.
 It means, magic, magic box.

Here, the class was about to review the list of vocabulary from the previous lesson using several objects hidden in a shoe box, and this box itself gave him a quick opportunity to introduce the word *magic* (line 1). He first offered a clue saying that students might have seen it on TV shows (line 5), and then, with no student responses, he provided the Korean translation (line 7).

Eliciting a Korean word from students and translating it into English was another method of teaching new vocabulary. The same shoe box discussed in the excerpt above provided the teacher such an opportunity during another observation session.

- (6) 1 T: (Shows the shoe box in which an OHP transparency)
 자, 열고 싶은데 어떻게 하면 열리죠?
 Now, I'd like to open this. But how?
 2 SS: 열려라 참깨!
 Open sesame!
 3 T: 영어로는?
 How do you say it in English?
 4 SS: Open, open.
 5 T: Open sesame. Sesame. Repeat after me. Sesame.
 6 SS: Sesame.
 7 T: Now, Open sesame! (Lifts the cover of the box)

In this interaction, the teacher was about to take out the transparency copy of a textbook illustration. Instead of opening the box immediately,

however, he was trying to trigger students' curiosity (line 1). Thus, his young students suggested using a magic spell from a famous story *One Thousand and One Nights* ("Open, Sesame!"), but only in Korean (line 2). Then, the teacher made this situation as the perfect context to introduce the word *sesame* (line 3-7).

Finally, regarding the COLT category of 'sociolinguistic' aspect of English, the teacher made only a little attempt to provide contextual information in relation to the target utterances. Immediate context of textbook dialogues was discussed only during the second observation (7.57%) and broader, social and cultural context of English speaking countries was taught for 15.54% of the third lesson. Excerpt (7) reports on his interaction with students on these topics.

- (7) 1 T: (Teaching the names of rooms in a two-story house on OHP)
 Bed 는 침대고, bedroom 은 침실.
"Bed" means a bed and "bedroom" means a bedroom.
- 2 S: 다락방!
Attic!
- 3 T: 예, 다락방이 있지요. Attic.
Yes, there is an attic in a house.
- 4 T: 보통 미국 영화 고스트 이런 거 보면,
Usually, when you watch American movies like 'Ghost',
 다락방에서 어떤 일이 벌어지지요.
something happens in an attic.
- 5 S: 캐스퍼!
Casper!
- 6 T: 특히 금요일에 많은 유령이 나오지요.
Especially on Fridays, lots of ghosts appear.

While he was teaching the rooms of a house (line 1), a student called out in Korean suggesting the inclusion of an attic in the picture the class was looking at (line 2). In line 3, the teacher accepted this idea first and then provided the corresponding English word as well. Then, based on his knowledge of American movies, he continued to give a brief explanation about attics in western cultures (line 4). This feedback, particularly the word *ghost*, in turn reminded another student of a popular cartoon character *Casper* (line 5). The teacher expanded this response even

further by introducing one of the believes about ghosts in the target language culture (line 6).

3.2.3. Participation Structures and Students' Voluntary Participation

Generally speaking, the most common participant structure in this class was 'teacher-centered', interaction between the teacher and the class or individual students. Due to his frequent, thorough lectures, the teacher tended to dominate classroom interaction for more than half of every EFL lesson, 56.46% on an average (see Table 4). On the other hand, this teacher hardly let students rehearse EFL dialogues in chorus; 'choral' student recitations that took up more than 20% of observation was largely the result of watching video clips and singing songs together. He did not boost 'students-centered' participation structure much, either: a role-play activity was observed only once and very briefly (4.06%, or less than two minutes). Accordingly, in quantitative terms, students' opportunities in practicing conversational exchanges in English seemed limited to a few pair and group activities for only 20.16% of the observation time.

However, although it might appear from the perspective of participation structures that students' participation in this class was considerably restricted, strong evidence was found to claim that the teacher was indeed concerned about incorporating student responses into classroom interaction as much as possible. First of all, he tried to encourage students to exploit all of their knowledge about the English language and related topics and to bring them up into discussion.

Table 4. Participant Structures in Classroom Interaction

	Lesson #1	Lesson #2	Lesson #3	Average
<i>T-centered</i>	54.28%	53.24%	61.84%	56.46%
<i>SS-centered</i>	4.06%	0%	0%	1.35%
<i>Choral</i>	24.11%	23.15%	18.83%	22.03%
<i>Group/Pair</i>	17.54%	23.61%	19.32%	20.16%

- (8) 1 T: (Showing the illustration of a two-storied house)
 몇 가지 질문을 하겠어요. What's this?
I'll ask you a few questions.
- 2 SI: House.
- 3 T: Good. Long, long time ago...Repeat me.
 Long long time ago.

- 4 SS: Long long time ago.
 5 T: What's this?
 6 S1: It's a puppy.
 7 S2: It's Min-ho.
 8 S3: It's a doll.
 9 S4: It's a bed.
 10 S5: Window.
 11 S6: It's a roof.

For example, in this excerpt that immediately preceded excerpt (7), the teacher started discussion of a textbook illustration with a vague question in line 1. The first reply from students to this question was “house” (line 2), probably the most appropriate choice in this situation. Yet, instead of proceeding directly to the teaching of key vocabulary (*bedroom*, *living room*, and so on), the teacher attempted to generate more participation from students. By calling the house in the picture the one from a long time ago as if he was about to begin telling a fairy tale (line 3), he raised students’ attention to the illustration first. Then, when he threw the same question once again (line 5), six more students came up to compete with a variety of answers utilizing all the English resources they had (line 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11).

Moreover, this teacher promoted students’ participation even further by allowing them to use Korean words as illustrated in Excerpt (9).

- (9) 1 T: 빠진 게 뭘까?
 What's missing?
 2 S: 굴뚝.
 Chimney.
 3 T: I'm drawing it (adds a chimney to the picture)
 4 T: (Pointing to the chimney) What's this?
 5 S: It's 굴뚝.
 It's a chimney.
 6 T: It's chimney.
 7 S: It's 연기.
 It's smoke.
 8 T: Smoke.

In this interaction, by the time students ran out of English words to

describe the picture, the teacher asked a thought-provoking question, "What's missing?" (line 1). It seemed to have piqued students' interest even more and raised their desire to take a part in the discussion. Thus, although in Korean, one student pointed out there was no chimney in the picture (line 2). Upon this response, the teacher accepted the idea quickly (line 3) and asked if anyone knew a corresponding English word (line 4); even though he did not expect so, it was an another attempt to elicit student talks. Therefore, as one student managed to come up with a strategy to combine a Korean word in a familiar English sentence structure (line 5), the teacher simply rephrased it with the target word (line 6), without any other conscious-raising explanation for the word *chimney*.

Such feedback had an immediate influence on other students; without the risk of embarrassment, they were further encouraged to join in the interaction regardless of their English knowledge. Thus, one student, who noticed that the teacher drew in the picture a plume of smoke coming out of the chimney, shouted out loud another sentence (line 7) using Korean instead of the target word, *smoke*. Again, it became the teacher's work to provide the corresponding English word (line 8).

Sometimes, as in the interaction below in Excerpt (10), this teacher directed students clearly to use Korean words so as to make the interaction continue.

- (10) 1 T: (Taking a ball-point pen out of a shoe box)
What's this?
- 2 Sl: It's a pen.
- 3 T: It's a...
- 4 S2: Pencil.
- 5 T: Pencil? No pencil. 우리말로 하세요.
You may use Korean.
- 6 S3: It's a 볼펜.
It's a ball-point pen.
- 7 T: It's a 볼펜.
It's a ball-point pen.
Repeat after me one time. *Ball fountain pen.
- 8 SS: Fountain pen.
- 9 T: Fountain. Good.

Here, the class was reviewing the sentence pattern of *What's this?* and *It's ____*, and the teacher asked of the English word for a ball-point pen (line 1). As this word hadn't been taught before, a student tried with his existing word *pen* (line 2). Similarly, when the teacher indicated he was expecting a different answer (line 3), another student tested out another word *pencil* (line 4). Now, knowing that his students did not know the target word in English, the teacher directed them to use Korean (line 5). This way, an additional opportunity for student participation was generated, and another student managed to take part in the interaction by saying line 6 playfully with English-like pronunciation of the Korean word.

Students' freedom to use Korean in lieu of English vocabulary seems to make a significant contribution to frequent occurrences of voluntary participation that otherwise might have been observed less often. Excerpt (II) is an example:

- (II) 1 T: (Shaking the box)
 2 Sl: Eraser.
 3 T: No. (continued to shake the box)
 4 S2: Pencil.
 5 T: Pencil? No.
 6 S3: 불사조.
Phoenix.
 7 T: 불사조가 뭔데?
What is Phoenix?
 8 S3: 영원히 죽지 않는 새.
A bird that never dies.
 9 T: Immortal.
 10 S4: 불새.
Firebird
 11 T: 불사조는……. Phoenix.
In English, a phoenix is….

This exchange was taking place after all the students' attempts to guess the object in the box had failed (*pen*, *knife*, *chalk*, and so on). When two more guesses did not work (line 2 and 4), one student jumped in with a rather hilarious idea (line 6), which might have been treated as distracting in other classrooms. The word *phoenix* was not only an

improper choice for the context of the lesson content but it was also said in Korean. However, the teacher offered this volunteering student an additional turn so that she can explain her word choice in her own terms (line 7-8), and then he translated it into English (line 9). Such interaction in turn provoked subsequent student participation, too. As the teacher was about to provide the target English word (line 11), another student quickly took the floor to display his understanding of an immortal bird again in Korean (line 10).

4. Summary and Discussion

According to the observation of his teaching, the participating teacher was acting out the externally developed curriculum with his own teaching style consistently throughout the study. Although most of his teaching activities were what might be commonly observed in other EFL classrooms, it was clear that this teacher had a strong preference to only a few kinds. More importantly, he deployed his own strategies in arranging and unfolding each type of activity in the lesson and maintained them over time.

As to the curricular goals of teaching EFL for communicative purpose, the lessons of this teacher were meeting the guidelines in general terms particularly in comparison with the traditional language classrooms. Yet, the findings from this teacher may raise some issues in current implementation process of the curriculum concerning classroom teachers' interpretation of the curricular objectives (or the communicative language teaching approach *per se*) and their enactment within the reality of classroom situation.

First, in relation to the goal of enhancing students' competence in face-to-face oral communication, the observed teacher seemed to have interpreted it more as a speaking-skill oriented instruction and paid considerably less attention to preparing students for listening comprehension tasks. Despite that he tried to make the most use out of the provided text materials, his listening activities appeared to be brief and subsidiary to speaking skills. In most cases, he made students simply attend to or repeat after the recordings of native speakers, which possibly minimized students' active role for listening comprehension and downgraded the function of listening activities to either pre- or follow up activity of his

lecture and speaking-oriented tasks.

Such use of listening activities does not necessarily endorse the theoretical grounds on which the new EFL curriculum was constructed. Sufficient amount of target language input and development of fine listening skills were regarded as critical foundation for successful second language acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Asher & Willey, 1987). In this class, yet, it seemed to lack both the teacher's awareness of and practical guideline from outside about how to adapt the provided teaching materials for the listening activities with a specific learning task. More importantly, these findings may contradict what many teachers claimed in earlier survey studies on Korean EFL classroom practices saying they were making heavy use of audio/video materials too much (e.g., Jee, 1998). In this sense, the results from the present study brings back the issue of the disparity between classroom teachers' own description of their teaching and the findings from observational data. It also raises the possibility that many aspects of the reality in EFL classrooms might have been overlooked in the past due to insufficient descriptive analyses.

As to the second curricular goal of teaching EFL for communicative functions, the classroom instruction should be given in the way to facilitate students' use of target language in interactions as a means to accomplish their communicative needs (Widdowson, 1989). In this regard, the teaching practices of the observed teacher seemed to reflect the recent turnaround in Korean EFL education toward communication oriented language teaching. By treating EFL dialogues in their entirety, he encouraged students to become familiar not only with the meaning of individual utterances but also with the organization and coherent use of those in an extended discourse. As part of such effort, the teacher also tried not to bring analytical aspects of the language system to students' attention. Grammatical rules and pronunciation seldom became the main focus of instruction unless those were the declared goal of a lesson. Likewise, students' mistakes in these areas were not addressed unless their communication in English was at risk or the same problem recurred in many students. Moreover, it was apparent that this teacher was at least aware of the need to discuss contextual elements regarding speech events and managed to provide some information about broader context of the interactions such as social customs and cultural background.

Nonetheless, the strategies of this teacher may not have sufficiently

supported students' use of English in a more natural environment. Except for a few classroom routines (e.g., greetings, conversation about the weather, etc.), the teacher seldom invited their students to practice English in relation to their personal experience, life, or knowledge about other topics. In order to prepare students to perform the textbook expressions "out there" in a proper way and in accordance with contextual variants of the ongoing interaction when they leave the "womb of the classrooms" (Brown, 1991), the lack of students' opportunity to incorporate classroom second language learning experience into their real life communication needs to be discussed more seriously in the research of Korean EFL education.

Next, in terms of the curricular objective regarding the amount and quality of classroom interaction, this teacher showed more concern to increase the extent of students' active participation, to compare with traditional second language classrooms. Even so, it was observed that he still preferred teacher-centered activities the most whereas he didn't utilize students-centered interaction as much. It could not only be the result of personal preference or believes in second language learning but also be the reflection of his concern with the conflict he experienced between efficient management of a large class and pedagogical effects of activities. His adaption of a pair work into small group activity was an example of his efforts to maintain the class orderly during beneficial but possibly less controllable group interaction. Likewise, the reason he used songs and TPR activities mostly as a means to refresh students' interest and participation should be interpreted in the same perspective.

Moreover, the exchanges observed between the participating teacher and students during teacher-centered interactions well exemplified that the type of participant structure manifested in activities should be considered important but not as an absolute indicator of the attitude a teacher has toward constructing the ideal learning environment. Rather, the potential and actual degree of individual students' involvement in classroom interaction as well as their contribution in this class was influenced greatly by the way the teacher communicated with students and by the extent to which he endured their voluntary participation.

5. Conclusion

Our knowledge of what actually goes on in classrooms is only expanded if we go into the classrooms to collect data, and if all data are interpreted within the classroom context, i.e., the context of their occurrence (van Lier, 1988). From this perspective, this study aimed to examine how the theoretically driven curriculum would be applied into Korean elementary school context which is different from the culture where the communicative language teaching approach has emerged.

The description of the teaching scenes observed in a natural classroom setting rendered concrete evidences on how an ordinary Korean EFL teacher would perceive the curricular objectives and was applying them to his teaching. It was also confirmed that classroom practices may not always underscore the principles and guidelines of a curriculum during the implementation process. Doing so, it highlighted the practical issues classroom teachers need to deal with at their own teaching sites for the realization of a large-scale curriculum, and the instructional strategies the participating teacher employed in the lesson were interpreted as his efforts to cope with the discrepancy between an idealized classroom and the reality.

Therefore, the results from this study suggest that the future research on Korean EFL education focus not only on developing the teaching activities that are more practically applicable to authentic school context but also on supporting teachers so that those activities could be delivered into classrooms more efficiently and appropriately. It also seems to be critical to establish an ongoing teacher education system which will enhance teachers' capability to reflect on their own teaching practices as a main variant of a curriculum implementation process.

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Appendix A

Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT): Part A
(Allen, Frolich, and Spada, 1984)

COLT Observation Scheme: Definition of Categories

The COLT observation scheme is divided into two parts. Part A describes classroom events at the level of episode and activity, while Part B analyzes the communicative features of verbal exchanges between teachers and students or among students themselves as they occur within each activity.

Part A: Classroom Events

I. Activity

The first parameter is open-ended; no predetermined descriptors have to be checked off by the observer. Each activity and its constituent episodes are separately described: e.g., drill, translation, discussion, game, and so on (separate activities); alternatively, teacher introduces dialogue, teacher reads dialogue aloud, students repeat dialogue parts after teacher (three

episodes of one activity).

II. Participant Organization

This parameter describes three basic patterns of organization:

A. Whole Class

1. Teacher to student or class, and vice versa (One central activity led by the teacher is going on; the teacher interacts with the whole class and /or with individual students.)
2. Student to student, or student(s) to class (Students talk to each other, either as part of the lesson or as informal socializing; one central activity led by a student may be going on, e.g., a group of students act out a skit with the rest of the class as the audience.)
3. Choral work by students (The whole class or groups participate in the choral work, repeating a model provided by the textbook or teacher.)

B. Group work

1. All groups at work on the same task
2. Groups at work on different tasks

C. Individual seat work (Students work on their own, all on the same task or on different tasks.)

D. Group/individual work (Some students are involved in group work; others work on their own.)

III. Content

This parameter describes the subject matter of the activities, that is, what the teacher and the students are talking, reading, or writing about or what they are listening to. Three major content areas have been differentiated, along with the category Topic Control:

A. Management

1. Procedural directives
2. Disciplinary statements

- B. Explicit focus on language
 - 1. Form (explicit focus on grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation)
 - 2. Function (explicit focus on illocutionary acts such as requesting, apologizing, and explaining)
 - 3. Discourse (explicit focus on the way sentences combine into cohesive and coherent sequences)
 - 4. Sociolinguistic (explicit focus on the features which make utterances appropriate for particular contexts)
- C. Other topics (the subject matter of classroom discourse, apart from management and explicit focus on language)
 - 1. Narrow range of reference (This subcategory refers to the immediate classroom environment and to stereotyped exchanges such as "Good morning" or "How are you?" which have phatic value but little conceptual content. Included in this category are routine classroom references to the date, day of the week, weather, and so on.)
 - 2. Limited range of reference (Topics in this subcategory refer to information beyond the classroom but still conceptually limited: movies, holidays, school topics such as extracurricular activities, and topics which relate to the students' immediate personal and family affairs, e.g., place of residence, number of brothers and sisters, and so on.)
 - 3. Broad range of reference (Topics of broad range go well beyond the classroom and immediate environment and include reference to controversial public issues, world events, abstract ideas, reflective personal information, and other academic subject matter, such as math or geography.)
- D. Topic control (Who selects the topic that is being talked about—the teacher, the student, or both?)

IV. Student modality

This section identifies the various skills involved in a classroom activity. The focus is on the students, and the purpose is to discover whether they are listening, speaking, reading, or writing, or whether these activities are occurring in combination. The category Other covers such activities as drawing, modeling, acting, or arranging classroom displays.

V. Materials

This parameter describes the materials used in connection with classroom activities.

A. Type of materials

1. Text (written)
 - a. Minimal (e.g., captions, isolated sentences, work lists)
 - b. Extended (e.g., stories, dialogues, connected paragraphs)
2. Audio
3. Visual

B. Source / purpose of materials

1. Pedagogic (specifically designed for L2 teaching)
2. Non-pedagogic (materials originally intended for nonschool purposes)
3. Semi-pedagogic (utilizing real-life objects and texts but in a modified form)

C. Use of materials

1. Highly controlled (close adherence to materials)
2. Semi-controlled (occasional extension beyond the restrictions imposed by the materials)
3. Minimally controlled (materials as a starting point for ensuing conversation, which may cover a wide range of topics)

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