Enhancing English Teachers’ Communicative Language Teaching
Through a Short-Term Professional Development in Korea

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교사연수를 통한 현직 영어교사의
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Abstract

In relation to implementing the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in a Korean context, many different efforts have been made since the early 2000s. However, these efforts have not successfully been adopted due to pragmatic reasons. In this study, the authors explored how a short-term professional development influenced English teachers’ self-efficacy to implement the CLT in Korea. The data consisted of a post-survey distributed to teachers (n=80), in-depth individual interviews with teachers (n=10), and researchers’ classroom observations. The findings showed that professional development helped teachers feel more confident and prepared to implement CLT. In addition, professional development boosted teachers’ motivation to adapt CLT into their future English classrooms. However, findings showed that English teachers were still struggling with implementing CLT for two major reasons: 1) the standardized university entrance exam that focuses on grammar and reading for high school students and 2) large class sizes with students who have various levels of English proficiency. In conclusion, several suggestions how to employ the CLT method successfully through professional development in Korea are provided.

1. Introduction

There have been many different teaching methods implemented in English language teaching worldwide. For example, the Grammar Translation Method dominated English teaching in Korea from 1970 until the 1990s because Korean EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers believed that studying grammatical rules and memorizing vocabularies was the key success to learning a second language [1]. However, due to globalization and a desire compete in the global economy, Korea needed more people who were capable of speaking and writing in English, and considered it essential to increase the number of people who could efficiently communicate in English [2].

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been a popular teaching method in Korea since the early 2000s when the Korean Ministry of Education announced the sixth curriculum in 2001 that altered the policy of learning English in Korea. The primary goal of using the CLT method was to enable Korean English language learners to effectively communicate with English speakers from all over the world [3]. To achieve this goal, the policy aimed at building communicative competence by implementing the
CLT method in English learning classrooms [4].

In terms of implementing the CLT method in a Korean context, many different resolutions have been made (Nam, 2005). However, these efforts have not proven to be successful due to pragmatic reasons rooted in the teaching environment [5].

Recognizing the importance of the CLT method for EFL teachers in Korea, this study aims to understand how a short-term professional development influenced on English teachers’ self-efficacy to successfully implement the CLT method in their own English classrooms.

2. Data Collection and Analysis
The data consisted of post-survey distributed to teachers (n=80), in-depth individual interviews with teachers (n=10), and researchers’ classroom observations. To analyze interview data sources, the research team used thematic analysis. Following Creswell’s [6] multi-step design analysis, the research team read pre-service teachers’ written narratives and convened to discuss general codes for responses encountered in the data. In order to increase reliability of the current study, the research team conducted peer-debriefing and member-checking during data analysis.

3. Study Findings
The findings showed that the professional development helped teachers feel more confident and prepared to implement the CLT. During interviews, teachers mentioned that professional development boost their motivation to implement CLT in their future English classrooms. In addition, throughout professional development (PD), participating teachers share their own experiences and tips each other, thus, the PD site created a learning community that allowed teachers to modify and create different activities while exploring the CLT method.

However, findings also showed that there were two major difficulties of implementing the CLT method in Korea: 1) teachers are under pressure to focus on grammatical instruction to prepare students for English section in a standardized national College Scholastic Ability Test and 2) the English proficiency varies greatly amongst the students in EFL classrooms.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, several suggestions on how to employ the CLT method successfully through professional development in Korea are provided. First, the Ministry of Education should expand their budget to provide increased professional development opportunities for English instructors to gain confidence in the practical application of CLT in the classroom. In addition to this, the Ministry of Education can explore opportunities for selected English instructors to visit English-speaking countries in order to receive adequate training in the CLT method, and then designate those instructors as lead trainers to deliver workshops in selected areas.

Second, emphasis of learning needs to be altered from the grammar-focused examination that is currently in place. Even though some education experts are worried about the side effects of changing the exam system such as boosting the private English education industry, the test should include speaking and writing sections, which could possibly help administrators and teachers to understand the need to adopt CLT in Korea. In addition, adding socio-cultural aspects in English textbooks may attract students’ interest when concerning their need to improve their speaking and writing skills in order to visit foreign countries.

The Korean government’s shift to CLT was to refocus classroom instruction on acquiring communicative competence, especially speaking and writing. Considering the purpose of learning English, we cannot be afraid of adopting communicative language teaching and learning. This is because we all know that the reason for learning English is to communicate with others globally, not short-sighted goals such testing scores. EFL teachers have to meet these challenges and prepare students for a life outside of testing.

References 참고문헌


