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KOREAN TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND  
THEIR IMPACTS UPON THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION-INITIATED REFORMS

by

CHEONG MIN YOOK

Under the Direction of Dr. John M. Murphy

ABSTRACT

This study aims to expand studies on ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs by investigating the relationship among Korean teachers' beliefs about English language education in Korea, sources of their beliefs, their perceptions of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MOE)-initiated reforms in English language education, and the degree of implementation of the reforms in their classroom teaching. Toward that end, the study employed both quantitative and qualitative research instruments: a survey with a questionnaire, interviews, and observations. The study surveyed 158 in-service teachers. Among these 158 teachers, 10 were selected for interviews and observations. Each of the 10 teachers was interviewed three times and his/her classroom teaching observed twice.

The findings of the study indicate: a) the beliefs held by the majority of the participants were based on the communication-oriented approaches (COA) to English language teaching, which has been recommended by the MOE in its efforts to reform English language education in Korea; b) major sources of the participants' beliefs seemed to be their experiences as learners in overseas English programs and domestic in-service teacher education programs with practical curricula; c) the teacher participants' perceptions of the reforms' general direction were largely consistent with their COA-based beliefs, but their perceptions of specific reform policies and measures were dictated by their concerns with realities of EFL education and their positions; and d) not the participants' beliefs but their negative perceptions of reform policies and measures AND the constraints they cited were the main obstacles to the implementation of the reform policies and measures in their classroom teaching.

The findings reveal gaps and mismatches among the participants' beliefs, perceptions, and practices. The study interprets such gaps and mismatches not as inconsistencies but as symptoms of a transitional stage through which English language education in Korea has been going. The study discusses the implications of the findings for Korean EFL teachers, EFL/ESL teacher education programs, and reform agents. The study ends with four suggestions for future research.

**INDEX WORDS:** Teachers' beliefs, Teacher education, Reforms in English language education, Korean EFL context, Teaching practices, Perceptions, Qualitative research

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CHEONG MIN YOOK

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2010

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Cheong Min Yook  
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August 2010

To my mother & late father

for their trust and sacrifice

&

to my husband

for his love and support

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Prelude

In the last three decades, the focus of research on teaching has shifted from teachers' behavior to areas of cognition that prompt such behavior. As part of this shift, teachers' beliefs have been recognized as an important variable in teaching (Renzaglia, Hutchins, & Lee, 1997; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000).<sup>1</sup> This shift in research focus has generated a substantial body of insights into teachers' beliefs, which in turn has led to several research reviews (Calderhead, 1996; Pajares, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Richardson, 1996; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000; Verloop, Van Driel, & Miejer, 2001; Wenden, 1999; Woods, 1996). K. Johnson (1994) predicted that "research on teachers' beliefs [would] ultimately become one of the most valuable psychological constructs for teaching and teacher education" (p. 439).

An assumption underlying research into teachers' beliefs is that teachers, along with learners, are at the center of education (Richardson, 1996). The general consensus in the literature has been that teachers' beliefs have a critical impact on the way they teach in the classroom, learn how to teach, and perceive educational reforms (M. Borg, 2001). Renzaglia et al. (1997), for example, observe that beliefs (and attitudes) are "not only reflected in teachers' decisions and actions, there is evidence that teachers' beliefs (and attitudes) drive important decisions and classroom practice" (p. 361).

It is within this framework, grounded in an analysis of broader educational research, that research on English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) teachers' beliefs has emerged. The general consensus in ESL/EFL teacher research literature has been similar to that in the more

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<sup>1</sup> Teachers' beliefs in this study refer to beliefs teachers hold in five main areas identified by Calderhead (1996). For a detailed discussion, see the theoretical framework discussion in Chapter 2.

general educational research: ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs exert significant influence on how they teach, how they learn to teach, and how they perceive educational reforms (Allen, 2002; S. Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002).

This growing consensus signals that exploring ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs is important for a better understanding of the state of English language education in specific ESL/EFL contexts. It also implies that research on ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs is particularly important in contexts where reforms in English language education are matters of serious concern. A successful implementation of any educational reform is closely related to how teachers perceive the reform, and their perceptions can be influenced by their beliefs about English language education. Therefore, the success of reforms in English language education is contingent upon ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs. This relationship between the success of reforms and teachers' beliefs points to the significance of research on ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs.

Since the late 1980s, globalization has been matched by the growing importance of English. The globalization of the world economy led mainly by English-speaking countries and multinational corporations has consolidated the status of the English language as a lingua franca (Held & McGrew, 2003). In addition, English has gained more importance in various fields such as science, media, and tourism. Crystal (2003) claims that, as of 1996, 85% of selected 500 international organizations used English as an official language, over 80% of all feature films released in 2002 were in English, and, as of 2003, some 80% of the world's electronically stored information on the internet was in English (pp. 87, 99, 115). In other words, the function of English as a tool for global communication has been intensifying over recent years (Thompson, 2003). This trend seems unstoppable, as Crystal (2003) observes: "The momentum of growth has



become so great that there is nothing likely to stop its [English's] spread as a global lingua franca" (p. x).

As a response to global economic changes and the increasing importance of the English language as an international lingua franca, tremendous demands for English language education have increased worldwide, especially in countries belonging to what Kachru (1994) calls the expanding circle, where English is used as a foreign language. Moreover, many of these non-English-dominant countries have attempted to reform English language education policies by adopting communication-oriented approaches (COA) to English language teaching.<sup>2</sup> The Republic of Korea (or South Korea, hereafter just 'Korea') is one of these countries. The first official English language education in Korea started when a British teacher named Thomas E. Hallifax was commissioned to run a royal school named "Dongmunhak" in 1883. The school's primary function was to raise a number of royal interpreters who would serve the king and high-ranking aristocrats as the country, which was a kingdom at that time, began to open its door to western countries (Baik, 1992; Y. Choi, 2006; Jeong, 2004; Jung & Min, 1999; C. Kim, 2002; Paik, 2005; Shim, 1999).

Since this initial effort of official English language teaching, English has become the most important foreign language in Korea, and it permeates almost every aspect of Korean life. English has become a critical part of high-stakes tests, deciding major opportunities in the lives of Koreans (e.g., college entrance, employment, and job promotion). Approaches to English language education in Korea have been dominated by grammar-focused, reading-based

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<sup>2</sup> The COA label is used in this study to refer to such teaching approaches and methods as Communicative Language Teaching, Task-based Language Teaching, Cooperative Language Learning, among others. In particular, COA refers to the approaches and methods recommended by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology in its efforts to reform English language education in Korea. The approaches/methods involve promotion of the ability to communicate in spoken English, employment of interactive and group activities, use of authentic materials, and learner-centered classroom instruction.

approaches (GRA) to English language teaching with emphasis on the mastery of forms and usage.<sup>3</sup> However, the increasing importance of English as a global lingua franca and the necessity of having a command of English in the age of globalization and information, together with the significant role of English in the lives of Koreans, have led the Korean government, or to be more specific, its Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (hereafter MOE), to explore and implement various reforms in English language education.<sup>4</sup> At the heart of reform attempts has been the adoption of COA into the national English curriculum (K. Kim, 2003; for a detailed discussion of the reform efforts, see Chapter 2).

As the MOE pushed forward with reforms in English language education, its reform efforts have drawn considerable research attention. A number of researchers have examined the relationship between Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms and their implementation of the reforms in their classroom teaching. Some studies have investigated Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)-related curricular innovations (e.g., S. Choi, 2000; Li 1998), while others have examined their perceptions of the Early English Learning (EEL) policy, or the policy of starting English education in primary school (e.g., Paik, 2005; Park, An & Ha, 1997). Still other studies have investigated Korean teachers' perceptions of cooperative teaching between native and nonnative English-speaking teachers (e.g., Choe, 2005).

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<sup>3</sup> The GRA label is used in this study to refer to the traditional approaches and methods that have been used in English classes in Korea. GRA is characterized by focus on grammar, emphasis on reading skills, translation of English passages into Korean, rote learning of words and idioms, and teacher-centeredness, among others. GRA is close to what Celce-Murcia (2001) names as the grammar-translation approach and the reading approach (p. 6). GRA has been the impetus of the reforms initiated by the Korean Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the Ministry has changed several times, starting from the Ministry of Education to the current the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. MOE is used as an acronym for the Ministry primarily to avoid confusing those who do not know the change.

The underlying assumption of these studies, as Li (1998) argued, was that teachers' perception of the feasibility of an innovation is "a crucial factor in the ultimate success or failure of that innovation" (p. 698). Understanding Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of MOE-initiated English language education reforms is important because teachers' perceptions are crucial in determining the ultimate success of those reforms. However, understanding perceptions only is not enough because teachers' perceptions are contingent upon their beliefs. That is, what most of the studies mentioned above failed to consider is the fact that teachers' perceptions are contingent upon their beliefs. In their examination of Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms, few of the previous studies have examined Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education. The present study attempts to fill this gap. It adopts a different approach to explore Korean EFL teachers' beliefs and perceptions. The study first explores Korean EFL teachers' context-specific beliefs about English language education. It then investigates their perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms. Finally, it looks into the relationship between teachers' beliefs, their perceptions of the reforms, and their teaching practices in classroom settings. In this way, the study will provide a clearer, more complete, and more nuanced picture of the relationship between Korean EFL teachers' beliefs, perceptions, practices, and implementation of the MOE-initiated reforms. In this different approach to the relationship between Korean EFL teachers' beliefs and their perceptions lies the significance of this study.

To better understand teachers' beliefs, it is important for teacher educators and policy makers to understand the sources of teachers' beliefs. A growing number of studies have referred to three major sources from which teachers' beliefs are formed: apprenticeship of observation, teaching experience, and teacher education (e.g., M. Borg, 2001; S. Borg, 1998, 1999; K.

Johnson, 1994; Peacock, 2001; Richardson, 1996). The apprenticeship of observation construct refers to possible impacts of teachers' previous experience of being a language learner.

Experiences as language learners often leave teachers with powerful images of what teaching should be like. Teachers' classroom teaching experience is another important source of teachers' beliefs. Also, studies of the relationship between teacher education and teachers' beliefs have revealed that teacher education represents another potential source for teachers' beliefs (e.g., Attardo & Brown, 2005; S. Borg, 1998; K. Johnson, 1992, 1994; Poynor, 2005). These sources interact with each other and contribute to the formation of teachers' beliefs about ESL/EFL education. Thus, in-depth information on the sources of teachers' beliefs may not only enhance our understanding of teachers' beliefs but also give us valuable insights into how we act on the beliefs if necessary. However, few previous studies have considered possible sources of Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education. Thus, the present study also addresses this lack of attention.

## 1.2. Research questions

Three assumptions underlie the study: a) ESL/EFL teachers are principal players not only in teaching but also implementing curriculum reforms; b) ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs influence their perceptions and behaviors, and c) the feasibility of any reform depends upon ESL/EFL teachers' perceptions of the quality and potential of that reform. This study investigates Korean EFL teachers' context-specific beliefs about English language education and the relationship their beliefs have with two areas: a) their perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms and b) ways in (and degrees to) which they implement MOE-initiated reforms in classroom teaching. To be more specific, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What beliefs do Korean EFL teachers have about English language education in Korea (e.g., in relation to Korean EFL teaching goals and methods, Korean EFL teachers' roles, and assessment)?
2. What are the sources of their beliefs?
3. What relationship(s) do Korean EFL teachers' beliefs have with their perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms in English language education?
4. What relationship(s) do Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms have with the implementation of the reforms in their classroom teaching?

The remainder of the dissertation consists of five chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework for the study that includes a working definition of teachers' beliefs, and a brief historical overview of English language education and reform efforts in Korea. Chapter 3 reviews literature relevant to teachers' beliefs and their relationship to teaching practices, teacher education, and educational reforms. It includes a review of studies on Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of English language education reforms. Chapter 4 describes the research methodology and explains both quantitative and qualitative methods used in data collection and data analysis. Chapter 5 presents the results of analysis of collected data and discussion of the results. This chapter ends with a summary of the results/major findings. Chapter 6 presents concluding remarks, implications of the study, and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This chapter discusses a conceptual framework grounded in current work on teachers' beliefs and related issues. It then presents a working definition of teachers' beliefs for the study and clarifies aspects of Korean EFL teachers' beliefs the study focuses upon. This definitional discussion is followed by a historical overview of efforts undertaken to reform English language education in Korea. The overview ends with a list of reform policies and measures the study pays particular attention to in its investigation of the relationship between Korean EFL teachers' beliefs and their perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms.

#### 2.1. A conceptual framework for teachers' beliefs

##### 2.1.1. Definitions of teachers' beliefs

Teachers' beliefs are an important concept in understanding teachers' thoughts, perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes (Richardson, 1996). Pajares (1992) acknowledges that "all teachers hold beliefs, however defined and labeled, about their work, their students, their subject matter, and their roles and responsibilities" (p. 314). In other words, teachers' beliefs are thought to have a filtering effect on teachers' conceptions of teaching, decisions, and judgments.

Defining teachers' beliefs, however, has not been easy. There has been no consensus on what the construct of teachers' beliefs refers to, and the term has acquired a rather non-specific, indistinct usage. Pajares (1992), who is known to have provided one of the most extensive theoretical syntheses of teachers' beliefs, reviewed 20 different researchers' definitions along with distinctions they make between beliefs and knowledge, but did not find a consensus on how to define teachers' beliefs. He observed: "The difficulty in studying teachers' beliefs has been caused by definitional problems, poor conceptualizations, and differing understandings of beliefs

and belief structures” (p. 307). Drawing on Pajares’s extensive review of studies on L2 teachers’ beliefs about teaching, S. Borg (2003) too concluded that a clear definitional consensus on what the construct of teachers’ beliefs refers to has been lacking in the field.

Perhaps the most complex issue in research on teachers’ beliefs is how to distinguish beliefs from knowledge (Allen, 2002; M. Borg; 2001; S. Borg, 2003; Calderhead, 1996; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992, Richardson, 1996). Many researchers voice concern that it is difficult to pinpoint where beliefs end and knowledge begins or vice versa. For example, Clandinin and Connelly’s (1987) concept of teachers’ personal practical knowledge, which refers to how a teacher understands a classroom situation, includes both teachers’ beliefs and knowledge. Grossman, Wilson, and Shulman (1989) treated teachers’ beliefs about subject matter as part of their subject matter knowledge. Pajares (1992) suggested that knowledge and what he termed the belief system, which consists of beliefs, attitudes, and values, are “inextricably intertwined” (p. 325). Kagan (1992) also decided to use the terms ‘beliefs’ and ‘knowledge’ interchangeably in her analysis of methodological issues involved in studying teachers’ knowledge. Likewise, Verloop et al. (2001) stated that “in the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, and intuitions are inextricably intertwined” (p. 446). Furthermore, Freeman and Graves (2004) suggested a subject matter representation. According to these ESL specialists, the subject matter representation lies at the intersection of teachers’ knowledge of a particular discipline, their knowledge of learners and learning, their knowledge of contexts, and their assumptions and beliefs about each of these elements (p. 89).

Moreover, some researchers use terms or concepts that can subsume both beliefs and knowledge. As mentioned above, Pajares (1992) proposed the concept of teachers’ belief systems. Similarly, Woods (1996), who found the distinction between knowledge and beliefs

untenable in a study of ESL teachers, argued that the terms ‘knowledge,’ ‘assumptions,’ and ‘beliefs’ do not refer to distinct concepts, but are points on a spectrum of meaning. Woods proposed an integrated network of beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge. In contrast, Wenden (1999) suggested beliefs to be a subset of metacognitive knowledge, which refers to “the specialized portion” of an acquired knowledge (p. 435). Wenden argued that “beliefs are distinct from metacognitive knowledge in that they are value related and tend to be held more tenaciously” (p. 436). S. Borg (1998) used the term, “teachers’ personal pedagogical systems,” which were defined as “stores of beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes” (p. 9). S. Borg (1999) then adopted the term “teachers’ cognition” and defined it as the sum of “the beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes that teachers hold on all aspects of their work” (p. 95). S. Borg (2003) redefined teachers’ cognition as “the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think” (p. 81). This notion of teacher cognition was also adopted by Allen (2002). In addition, the use of the term “beliefs” has shown much nuance in definition. For example, Pajares (1992) used the term in such a way that it largely referred to teachers’ educational beliefs, while M. Borg (2001) used the same term in a more specific way: in her usage, teachers’ beliefs mean “teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, or those beliefs of relevance to an individual’s teaching” (p. 187).

Despite the lack of consensus in definition and possible confusion in usage, researchers have been trying to clarify conceptualizations of teachers’ beliefs by looking into common features identified in various empirical works, accounts, and definitions. For example, drawing on Abelson (1979), Nespor (1987) identified four features that can be used in distinguishing beliefs from knowledge. The features include a) existential presumption, b) alternativity, c) affective and evaluative loading, and d) episodic structure. First, according to Nespor,



‘existential presumption’ refers to personal truth about students, their leaning, their ability, their maturity, and so on. Thus, for example, beliefs assert the existence or nonexistence of entities such as maturity in relation to students’ achievements. This reification of abstract characteristics into concrete ones is important, Nespor argued, because such entities tend to be seen as beyond the teacher’s control or influence. Second, ‘alternativity’ refers to conceptualizations of ideal situations differing significantly from present realities, and beliefs often incorporate a view of an ideal or alternative state that contrasts with reality. In this respect, beliefs serve as means for defining goals and tasks and organizing the knowledge and information relevant to the tasks. Third, beliefs are strongly associated with ‘affective and evaluative components’. Thus, beliefs are often expressed in the form of feelings, moods, and subjective evaluations based on personal preferences. Finally, beliefs are characterized by their ‘episodic structure’, that is, they are often found to be associated with particular, well-remembered events. Nespor also suggested that beliefs tend to be organized in terms of larger belief systems. These larger belief systems are loosely bounded networks and may contain inconsistencies and even contradictions. According to Nespor, this inconsistent nature of belief systems helps to simplify and deal with complex situations such as classroom teaching. Pajares (1992) provided a more extensive list, consisting of 16 “fundamental assumptions that may reasonably be made when initiating a study of teachers’ educational beliefs” (p. 324). Among the assumptions are the notions that: a) beliefs have stronger affective and evaluative components than knowledge; b) due to their potent affective and evaluative nature, beliefs affect behavior more strongly than knowledge, c) beliefs function as filters through which new phenomena or information are perceived or interpreted, and d) changes in beliefs during adulthood are rare (pp. 324-326). In contrast, M. Borg (2001) lists four features: a) a belief is accepted as true by the individual holding it, while knowledge

must be true in some external sense, b) beliefs guide people's thinking and action, c) individuals may be conscious or unconscious of their beliefs, and d) beliefs have an evaluative aspect (p. 186).

On the basis of these discussions of major features of beliefs, it can be said that: a) teachers' beliefs are of personal truth, b) teachers' beliefs are affective and evaluative, c) teachers' beliefs influence their behavior, d) teachers' beliefs function as filters through which information is perceived, e) teachers' beliefs serve as means of defining goals and tasks and organizing the knowledge and information relevant to those tasks, and f) teachers' beliefs are not easily changed.

#### 2.1.2. A definition for the study

In searching for a working definition of teachers' beliefs for the study, one of the study's primary assumptions may be worded as follows: it is particularly important to understand teachers' beliefs in countries such as Korea where the central government (or MOE) has been making serious efforts to reform the national curriculum in English. A working definition of teachers' beliefs needs to highlight the possible relationship between teachers' beliefs and educational reforms. For this reason, the study draws on the definition suggested by M. Borg (2001): "[A] belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior" (p. 186). This definition highlights beliefs' personal, affective, and evaluative nature and emphasizes their impact on behavior and perception, which is the focus of this study.

Teachers' beliefs consist of various categories. Nespor (1987) suggested that teachers hold beliefs about "their roles, their students, the subject matter areas they teach, and the schools

they work in” (p. 317). Calderhead (1996) listed slightly different categories. Calderhead argued that “there are five main areas in which teachers have been found to hold significant beliefs” (p. 719). First, Calderhead explained, teachers hold strong beliefs about their students and how they learn, and these beliefs are likely to influence how they teach and interact with their students and what kinds of activities they provide in class. Second, teachers hold varying beliefs about the nature and goals of teaching. For example, some may view teaching as a process of knowledge transmission, others as a process of guiding students’ learning. According to Calderhead, these beliefs in particular rarely change. Third, teachers hold beliefs about a subject (e.g., English), about what English education is about. Fourth, teachers also have beliefs about learning to teach. According to Calderhead, teachers commonly report that “teaching is largely a matter of personality together with a few managerial tactics that can be learned from observing other teachers” (p. 720). Finally, teachers tend to hold quite consistent beliefs about themselves, particularly in relation to the role of teaching. These beliefs about their roles as teachers may significantly influence the style of classroom management or the kind of classroom activities teachers prefer. Teachers’ beliefs as used in the study largely match the beliefs teachers hold in the five areas suggested by Calderhead (1996). Teachers’ beliefs in this study refer to (Korean EFL) teachers’ beliefs about a) their roles b) (EFL) teaching goals, c) (EFL) teaching methods, d) (Korean EFL) learners and how they learn, and e) assessment.

As discussed above, it has been generally accepted that human beliefs influence perceptions and that, thus, teachers’ beliefs influence the ways in which teachers perceive and act upon educational reforms (Nespor, 1987; K. Johnson, 1994; Pajares, 1992). Likewise, in the study, it is assumed that teachers’ beliefs influence their perceptions of educational reforms. This assumption in turn implies that beliefs and perceptions are closely related to each other, but they

may be different concepts. However, there seems to have been no serious attempt to distinguish these concepts. The two concepts have even acquired an indistinct usage. As Calderhead (1996) points out, it seems that “such terms as beliefs, values, attitudes, judgments, opinions, ideologies, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, personal theories, and perspectives have been used almost interchangeably” (p. 719). It may not be easy to distinguish perceptions from beliefs. But, in the present study, the concept/term “perception” is used to refer to positive vs. negative view, favoring vs. disfavoring, or liking vs. disliking. Thus, a teacher’s perception of a particular reform, for example, means whether the teacher views the reform positively or negatively, whether she favors it or disfavors it, or whether she likes it or dislikes it. In this sense, perceptions are close to attitudes in the study.

Another issue is how to distinguish “deep-rooted” beliefs from “articulated” beliefs. It seems that to date no study has addressed the issue of “deep-rooted vs. articulated” beliefs seriously. Perhaps M. Borg (2001) comes closest to the issue. She distinguishes between “conscious vs. unconscious” beliefs (p. 186). However, she simply notes: “[O]n this point there is disagreement, with some maintaining that consciousness is inherent in the definition of *belief*, and others allowing for an individual to be conscious of some beliefs and unconscious of others” (p. 186; emphasis in original).

What is significant is that “deep-rooted” beliefs can be different from “articulated” beliefs. Previous studies have employed survey and/or interview techniques to identify teachers’ beliefs. However, the beliefs identified in such a way may be “articulated” beliefs and may not be “deep-rooted” beliefs. One possible way to distinguish these two types of beliefs is to observe teachers’ classroom teaching and check if their teaching practices are consistent with their “articulated” beliefs. If so, we may say that the “articulated” beliefs are “deep-rooted” beliefs.

But even this solution may not be reliable because classroom teaching can be affected by various constraints. A number of studies have found that teachers' classroom teaching practices are not only influenced by their beliefs but also by constraints such as large class size, lack of resources, and washback effects of existing testing systems (Anderson, 1993; S. Choi, 2000; Feryok, 2008; Kirkgöz, 2008; Li, 1998; Matsuura et al., 2001; Nazari, 2007; Sato, 2002; Wada, 2002). For example, a teacher who really believes in the importance of ability to speak in English may not reflect that belief in her classroom teaching if she has to help her students to attain higher scores on a national college entrance examination.

For the moment, it seems that there is no definite way of distinguishing "deep-rooted" beliefs from "articulated" beliefs. S. Borg (1998) throws some light into this issue. In his exploration of a teacher's beliefs, S. Borg employed interviews and classroom observations. Through classroom observations, he identified "key instructional episodes" (p. 12). He then interviewed the teacher-participant, asking the teacher-participant to elaborate on the episodes. S. Borg accepted the resulting elaborations as part of the teacher's beliefs. In the current study, teachers' beliefs identified through interviews are accepted as their beliefs unless they are seriously contradicted by their classroom teaching practices, which were observed at least twice.

## 2-2. A historical overview of English language education reforms in Korea

"Official" English language education has a 126-year history in Korea. As briefly discussed in the introductory chapter, the first official English language education started in 1883. Then, in 1946, English was adopted as a key subject in the public school curriculum. At that time, Korea was under U.S. military administration. Since this official adoption of English as a key subject, English has become the most important and most commonly taught foreign language in Korea (Baik, 1992; Y. Choi, 2006; Jeong, 2004; Jung & Min, 1999; C. Kim, 2002; Paik, 2005;

Shim, 1999). English now plays a critical role in deciding educational and occupational opportunities for Koreans. For example, it serves an important role in the application process for prestigious secondary schools, colleges, and universities. Major employers in Korea, including the national and local governments, require scores on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) as part of application process. The TOEIC, which was first introduced in Korea in 1982, is administered by the Educational Testing Service (Sharron, 1997). In 2008 alone, more than two million Koreans took the test, spending more than 100 million U.S. dollars for test fees. Forty-five per cent of the two million took the test for job application purposes, 14% to fulfill a partial requirement for college graduation, and 7% for promotion (*Joins*, 8 February 2009).

Due largely to the critical role of English in the daily lives of Koreans, learning English has become a sort of national obsession. English education starts in the third year of primary school and continues into college. Some students wrestle with English not only in school but also after school, attending evening classes offered by private/commercial English institutes. Several local governments have built up multi-million-dollar English villages where students are exposed to what is supposed to be English immersion education provided by native English speakers. Moreover, it is estimated that more than 200,000 Korean students, including about 10,000 elementary school children, went abroad in 2005 alone, and more than half of the students came to the U.S. Most of the students who came to the U.S. attended English language training programs (*Joins*, 15 February 2007).

Along with the national obsession for English, there have been various MOE-initiated reform efforts. It must be noted here that, in Korea, educational policies are developed and tend to be implemented in a top-down fashion. The Korean education system consists of six years of

primary education, three years of middle school education, three years of high school education, and two to four years of college education. The Korean education system is centralized. The MOE administers educational policies and related administrative matters such as student enrollment, fees, curriculum, teacher recruitment, and school facilities (C. Kim, 2002). The MOE issues a national curriculum, which establishes national standards for the curricula for subjects at all school levels. Thus, the national curriculum developed and issued by the MOE controls both the content and instructional procedures of English language education at primary and secondary school levels.

Tollefson (2002) argues that the types, functions, and implications of English language education vary from place to place depending on specific historical, sociocultural, and economic conditions of a society and that language policies in education are not formed in isolation, but rather emerge in response to important social forces. At least four factors have contributed to the reform efforts of the MOE. The first factor is the increasing importance of English as an international language in the age of globalization. Starting in the 1980s, the MOE began placing English language education high on its agenda because English is considered to be an essential linguistic tool in the competitive global economy. In 1995, the Korean government declared an “era of globalization” with a goal of preparing the nation to meet the challenges of an increasingly globalized world. Under this globalization discourse, English language education began to receive tremendous attention and became the focus of serious reform efforts (K. Kim, 2003; Yim, 2003).

The second factor is an increasing criticism of traditional English teaching methods in Korea, which have been characterized by its emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and reading. This GRA-based English language teaching has dominated English language education in Korea.

Important English tests, including the national college entrance examination, or College Scholastic Ability Test, were designed primarily to assess grammatical knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and reading abilities and skills. Around the early 1980s, Koreans and the Korean government began to realize that the traditional approach to English teaching was the key reason why Korean English learners were not likely to develop high spoken English proficiency, even after 10 years of formal education. In response, they started looking for an alternative approach to English language education and began to emphasize the significance of COA-based teaching and learning of the English language.

The third factor that contributed to the reform efforts of the MOE is the spread of CLT into ESL and EFL in the 1980s (Butler, 2004, 2005; K. Kim, 2003). CLT views language as a system for communication. Its main focus is on what Hymes (1972) referred to as communicative competence, that is, knowledge and ability to use a linguistic system effectively, appropriately, and unconsciously. It assumes that the goal of language teaching/learning is learner ability to communicate in the target language, a goal that goes well beyond mere acquisition of grammatical rules (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). According to Larsen-Freeman (1986), CLT is characterized by a) the focus on communicative competence, b) the orientation toward learner-centeredness, c) an emphasis on the role of teachers as facilitator and providers of a secure, non-threatening atmosphere, d) an introduction of group activities, and e) a use of authentic materials. In its search for an alternative approach to English education, the MOE began to strongly emphasize COA-oriented English language teaching and adopted, among others, CLT as a way of implementing COA in English language education in Korea. As a result, the key aspects of the CLT approach were adopted to serve as a basis for the MOE's reform policies and measures. The best example is the 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum in English, which put



considerable emphasis on speaking ability and skills, learner-centeredness, and communicative activities (Sixth Curriculum Development Committee, 1992).

The fourth factor was socio-political. The interest in spoken English increased dramatically in the late 1980s due to two international games Korea hosted: the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games. In order to make the two international events successful, the Noh government (1988-1993) led an “internationalization” (*Guk-je-wha*) campaign and pushed people to learn “basic English” under the pretext that Koreans should be able to communicate with visiting foreigners. The MOE responded to the internationalization campaign with its decision to emphasize spoken English skills by revising the national curriculum in English. The result was the 5<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum (which will be further discussed below), and improving listening and speaking skills became primary objectives of English language education in Korea.

The interest in and demand for spoken English was expanded further in the 1990s. The newly-established Kim government (1993-1998) adopted a “globalization” (*Se-gye-wha*) campaign mainly to justify its political strategy of differentiating it from the past military regimes. As the government initiated the globalization campaign, it launched various reforms in public structures and institutions. Part of this reform drive was educational reforms. The reforms were led by the Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER) formed in 1994. The PCER’s reform-related proposals led to the passage of Education Reform Acts for Restructuring of Educational System and eventually to the issuance of the Revised 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum in 1995.

Most recently, the interest in COA-oriented English language teaching and learning has intensified. This renewed intensification is due to the newly established Lee government’s

(2008-2013) emphasis on innovation of English language education. The Lee government emphasizes that English language education in schools should change in such a way that students with high school education would be able to carry on basic English conversation with foreigners, and parental burden for private/commercial English language education should be drastically reduced (Ministry of Education, 2008, Yonhap News, 2009). Such concerns of the Lee government led to a “Plan to Activate Major Policies for English Language Education” announced by the MOE and the establishment of a Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) program. In this sense (i.e., the government’s concern with parental burden caused by the dependence upon private English institute), reforms in EFL education in Korea have been as much socio-political as educational.

The four factors discussed so far have contributed to the MOE’s efforts to reform English language education, and the MOE has actualized its reform efforts largely through a series of revisions of the national curriculum in English and related policies and measures. Since the 1980s, the MOE has revised the national curriculum in English at least three times and has issued a series of “new” policies and measures in relation to the revisions (see Table 2.1 for a summary of the MOE-initiated reforms).

Table 2.1. *Korean MOE-initiated reforms in English language education*

Year	Reforms
1987	Issuance of the 5 <sup>th</sup> National Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognition of English as an international language</li> <li>• emphasis on the ability to speak in English</li> <li>• plan to start English language education at the primary school - Early English Learning (EEL) policy</li> </ul>
1992	Issuance of the 6 <sup>th</sup> National Curriculum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introduction of COA into the national curriculum in English</li> <li>• focus on fluency rather than usage, the learner-centered class, communicative group activities, and authentic materials</li> </ul>
1994	Establishment of the Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improvement of English language pedagogy</li> <li>• emphasis on listening and speaking skills</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strengthening of intensive training for in-service Korean EFL teachers</li> <li>improvement of environments for English language education</li> <li>reemphasis of the importance of the EEL</li> </ul>
1995	<p>Passage of Education Reform Acts for Restructuring of Educational System Issuance of the Revised 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>decision to start English language education from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in 1997</li> <li>decision to introduce listening test items into the national college entrance exam</li> </ul> <p>Establishment of English Program in Korea (EPIK)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exposure of students and teachers to English of native speakers</li> <li>reform of English teaching methodologies</li> </ul>
1997	<p>Issuance of the 7<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emphasis on “Teaching English in English” (TEE), Task-based Learning, and Whole Language Approach</li> </ul>
2005	<p>Issuance of the Comprehensive Five-Year Plan for the Activation of English Education, 2006-2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>this was refined and expanded into the 2006 English language Education Reform Plan described below.</li> </ul>
2006	<p>Pronouncement of an English Language Education Reform Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recruitment of more native English-speaking teachers for team teaching with Korean EFL teachers</li> <li>enforcement of English language training for in-service Korean EFL teachers</li> <li>revision of (EFL) teacher education programs’ curricula</li> <li>introduction of writing in English, listening comprehension, and teaching-in-English performance into the “employment exams” for EFL positions at primary and secondary public schools</li> <li>increase of hours of English conversation classes from the third grade up</li> <li>preparation for English immersion education</li> <li>development of a National Test of English Proficiency</li> <li>policy of differential instructions for students with different proficiency levels</li> </ul>
2008	<p>Announcement of a Plan to Activate Major Policies for English Language Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduction of an “English conversation” instructor system</li> </ul> <p>Announcement of a Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>invitation of native English-speaking college students to teach English conversation classes in rural primary schools</li> </ul>
2009	<p>Report to the president on the MOE’s major plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changing the English test in the national college entrance examination by adding more listening comprehension items</li> </ul>

Along with the issuance of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum, faced with the overwhelming demand for English and encouraged, justifiably or unjustifiably, by the Critical Period

Hypothesis<sup>5</sup>, the MOE announced its tentative plan to start English language education at the

<sup>5</sup> Age-related differences in L2 acquisition has been debated since Lenneberg (1967) hypothesized the existence of a critical period after which complete and native-like mastery of a language is impossible. According to Lenneberg, the critical period lasts until puberty (around age 12 or 13), and language learning may be more difficult after puberty because lateralization has occurred by this time (Lenneberg, 1967, as cited in Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991, p. 156). Scholars have challenged this hypothesis. Krashen, Long, & Scarcella (1979), for example, reviewed the then existing empirical studies and attempted to resolve the inconsistent results from the studies by suggesting

primary school in 1992 (this plan will be called the Early English Learning (EEL) policy hereafter; the actual implementation of EEL was realized in 1997).

However, a serious effort to reform English language education started with the issuance of the 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum in 1992. This curriculum was supposed to guide English language education in Korea from 1995 to 2010. In a report on the preparation of the new national curriculum, the MOE stated that “the grammatical syllabus does not help much to develop learners’ ability to communicate in English” (The Sixth Curriculum Development Committee, 1992, p. 66). The 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum announced that the goal of English language education was to prepare students for the age of globalization, and the goal of English language teaching was to develop students’ ability to communicate in English. It emphasized that the traditional grammar-translation approach should be replaced by a more communication-oriented approach. It thus promoted a more direct focus on the promotion of the ability to communicate in spoken English, the introduction of communicative/group activities, the use of authentic materials, and learner-centered classroom instruction (The Six Curriculum Development Committee, 1992, p. 180-181). This is why the curriculum has come to be known as the Communicative Curriculum (Jeong, 2004; Li, 1998).

The issuance of the 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum was followed by the reform-related proposals of the PCER, which was established in 1994. The PCER claimed that educational reforms were urgent and inevitable to meet the challenges of globalization as well as solving educational problems such as increasing (some might say “excessive”) competition in college entrance, poor quality of public education, and heavy dependence upon private/commercial

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the now well-known generalizations: “(1) Adults proceed through early stage of syntactic and morphological development faster than children (where time and exposure are held constant): (2) Older children acquire faster than younger children (again in early stages of morphological and syntactic development where time and exposure are held constant): (3) Acquirers who begin natural exposure to second languages during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults” (Krashen et al., 1979, p. 573).

education, which demands unreasonable financial sacrifices of parents (Paik, 2005). One of the items on the PCER's reform agenda was to refocus English language education in schools toward spoken-English-oriented education. For this purpose, the PCER proposed among others: a) improvement of English language pedagogy, b) strengthening of English language training for in-service Korean EFL teachers, c) improvement of school environments for English language education, and most importantly d) extension of English language education into primary school education (Park, 2001).

As discussed above, the PCER's reform-related proposals led to the passage of Education Reform Acts for Restructuring of Educational System and eventually to the issuance of the Revised 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum in 1995. With the issuance of the revised curriculum, the MOE decided to reform the national college entrance examination (or the College Scholastic Ability Examination) by including listening comprehension items. As Jeong (2004) observed, this reform has exerted a tremendous influence on textbook development, teaching, and testing. Moreover, the MOE decided to start English language education at the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in 1997 and, for that purpose, specified in the Revised 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum the objectives of English language education at the primary school level as follows:

- a. Learner-centeredness
- b. Focus on the process of learning, not the outcome
- c. Teaching for comprehension, not for rote-learning or memorization
- d. Use of a notional-functional syllabus for appropriateness and relevancy, not grammar-structure syllabus.
- e. Emphasis on spoken English, not written English

f. Enhancement of intercultural understanding (Ministry of Education, 1995; as cited in Paik, 2005, p. 78)

Thus, the focus of primary school English language education was to develop spoken English skills.

In 1995, the MOE launched an “English Program in Korea” (EPIK). EPIK’s pronounced goal is “to enhance English communicative skills of Korean students and teachers, and increase national competitiveness and cultural exchange in the era of globalization” by inviting native English speakers as English teachers (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 1). As the goal pronouncement implies, EPIK was established with the mandate to improve speaking abilities of students and EFL teachers and to reform English teaching methodologies in Korea. Native English-speaking instructors (NESIs) recruited through the program are assigned to primary and secondary schools. Such NESIs teach English conversation classes in cooperation with Korean EFL teachers.<sup>6</sup>

Then, in 1997, the MOE issued the 7<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum. The goal of this new national curriculum was to produce “internationalized” citizens with knowledge of diverse cultures of the world. The 7<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum was characterized by its emphasis on “Teaching English in English” (TEE), Task-based Language Learning, and a Whole Language Approach (Ministry of Education, 1998; E. Kim, 1999; J. K. Lee, 1998).

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<sup>6</sup> According to a 2009 recruitment announcement, applicants for EPIK must: a) be native English speakers from one of the following seven countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States and b) hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree from an accredited university in one of the seven countries. Korean descendants with citizenships or legal residencies of one of the seven countries are also eligible. Successful applicants must sign a 52-week contract, receive a 10-day orientation, and serve as “Guest English Teachers,” teaching English conversation classes in cooperation with Korean EFL teachers at primary and secondary schools. For further information, see English Program in Korea. (2005). “September 2009 EPIK Invitation.” [Online], [http://www.epik.go.kr/member/dataroom\\_board.asp?db=sub\\_7\\_1&mode=view&num=133&page\\_num=1](http://www.epik.go.kr/member/dataroom_board.asp?db=sub_7_1&mode=view&num=133&page_num=1).

EPIK is similar to the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) program in several respects. The JET program was created in 1987 by the Japanese Ministry of Education with objectives of improving foreign language education in Japan and enhancing cultural exchange. It invites young college graduates from overseas to serve as assistant language teachers and participate in team teaching with Japanese language teachers.

The TEE policy encourages Korean EFL teachers to use English as a medium of instruction and, if possible, to use English only in class. This policy was issued as one of the remedies for pedagogical difficulties teachers and learners face in input-limited EFL contexts such as Korea (Kourago, 1993). According to E. Kim (1999) and J. K. Lee (1998), the 7<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum strongly recommended Task-based Language Teaching to further activate communicative activities in the classroom and the Whole Language Approach to redress the bias of the 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum toward oral language and fluency.

The 7<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum was followed by a “Comprehensive Five-Year Plan for the Activation of English Education, 2006-2010,” which was disseminated in 2005. A year after, in 2006, the comprehensive plan was refined and expanded into an “English Language Education Reform Plan.” This reform plan proposed eight policies and measures designed to facilitate the MOE-initiated reforms in English language education at every school level (Ministry of Education, 2006). First, far more native English-speaking teachers would be recruited and assigned to primary and secondary schools for team teaching with Korean EFL teachers. In particular, at least one native English-speaking teacher would be assigned to every middle school by the year of 2010. For this purpose, the volume of recruitment of native English-speaking teachers would be increased from 221 in 2004 to 2,900 in 2010, and, at the same time, EPIK would be reinforced in order to recruit better qualified native English speakers more efficiently. Second, English language training programs for in-service Korean EFL teachers would be strengthened and diversified. The MOE has been providing various conferences, seminars, workshops, and short- and long-term intensive English language education for the purpose of providing Korean EFL teachers with the guidance, support, and English proficiency necessary for the implementation of the reforms. Some of them were voluntary, and others were mandatory.

In the 2006 reform plan, the MOE pronounced that it would further reinforce English language training programs for in-service Korean EFL teachers. In particular, starting in 2007, it began to provide six-month intensive English language education to 1,000 teachers each year so that the cumulative number of reeducated teachers would reach to 10,000 by the year of 2015 (the number is approximately 30% of the current total number of primary and secondary school Korean EFL teachers, which is about 33,000: Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 9). The ultimate goal of the reinforcement of English language training for in-service Korean EFL teachers is “to enhance their English abilities enough for them to teach English in English” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 9). Third, (EFL) teacher education programs would be strongly encouraged to revise their curricula in order to better prepare prospective EFL teachers for COA-oriented teaching. The MOE asked teacher education programs to provide pre-service teachers with more classes related to oral and practical English. In response, many programs have revised their curricula. For example, the programs for primary teacher preparation have been strengthened: they require students to take twelve units of English now for graduation while only four units were required in the past (one course is equivalent to two or three units depending on the class hours of a course.) Furthermore, students who major in primary English education should take at least 33 units of English for graduation from 1997 (Park, 2001).

Fourth, the 2006 reform plan announced its plan to give an advantage to prospective teachers with high English proficiency in their application for teaching positions at public schools. For this purpose, writing in English, listening comprehension, and teaching-in-English performance would be introduced into the “employment exams” for EFL positions at primary



and secondary public schools by the year of 2009.<sup>7</sup> Fifth, the feasibility of starting English language education at the first grade would be studied. In addition, hours of English conversation classes from the third grade up would be increased. For example, third-grade students were receiving one (45-minute) English conversation class each week but would receive two classes per week. Sixth, the 2006 reform plan announced that English immersion education would be considered. Here English immersion education refers to teaching (and learning) subjects in English. This teaching method is supposed to help students acquire contents of subjects and English simultaneously. The MOE announced that it would start first with mathematics and science at the primary school level in specific areas such as Jeju Free International City and then extend to other subjects, levels, and areas.<sup>8</sup> Seventh, a National Test of English Proficiency would be developed and administered by the year of 2009. This national test was to replace the English test in the current national college entrance examination, which mainly assesses reading and listening skills. The national test, which was announced to be developed in three proficiency levels, was designed to balance assessment of four English language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The MOE expected that the National Test of English Proficiency, once implemented, would have a tremendous washback effect on EFL teaching and learning in Korea. However, in 2008, the MOE announced that the implementation of the National Test of English Proficiency would be postponed to 2012. Finally, the 2006 reform plan pronounced the policy of differential instructions for students with different proficiency levels. To facilitate the implementation of the policy, various textbooks and other materials for students with different proficiency levels would be developed. Moreover, the 2006 reform plan announced to establish

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<sup>7</sup> To obtain teaching positions at public schools in Korea, graduates from teacher education programs or similar programs have to pass highly competitive “employment exams,” which are administered by local offices of education every year.

<sup>8</sup> There are several “free international” cities in Korea. These cities are characterized by “no visa, no tax, and international education” policy, which is intended to attract foreigners’ investment and tourism.

and expand facilities that help students' exposure to ("authentic") English such as "English centers" and English-only classrooms. The reform plan also announced to consider other measures to support communicative English teaching and learning such as a satellite TV network or internet network for English language education.

More recently, the MOE issued a "Plan to Activate Major Policies for English Language Education" in 2008. The plan included three major policies. Two of them were reinforcement of existing policies: the development of a National Test of English Proficiency and the increase of English conversation class hours. The remaining one was a new policy and was about the introduction of an "English conversation" instructor system. "English conversation" teachers refer to EFL teachers who are employed to teach English conversation. The MOE announced that it planned to recruit 4,000 "English conversation" teachers and assign them to primary and secondary schools in 2010. Actual recruitment was to be handled by local Offices of Education.<sup>9</sup> In 2009, a total of 2,996 "English conversation" teachers had been recruited nationwide, and they were to be assigned to schools after a two-week orientation (Ministry of Education, 2008).

In 2008, the MOE also announced a "Teach and Learn in Korea" (TaLK) program. This is a scholarship program sponsored by the MOE. The program description reads:

Program participants will receive Korean government scholarships and teach English in after-school classes of Korean elementary schools while enjoying cultural experience programs organized by local Offices of Education .... TaLK scholars will be placed in schools in rural areas in need of great exposure to English and teach the language by forming one-on-one partnerships with Korean co-workers. (Ministry of Education, 2009)

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<sup>9</sup> According to a local office of education's 2009 recruitment announcement, applicants for the English conversation lecturer positions must: a) have high English proficiency, particularly in speaking and b) hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree in English Education or related majors. Successful applicants must sign a two-year contract. They are to teach English conversation classes and assist English-speaking-related activity and material development.

As the description implies, the TaLK was established mainly to increase Korean students' exposure to English. TaLK scholars, that is, native English-speaking college students selected for the TaLK scholarship, are assigned to primary schools in rural areas and serve as assistant instructors, teaching English conversation in cooperation with Korean EFL teachers. 380 native English-speaking college students were selected for the program and placed in rural primary schools throughout Korea (Ministry of Education, 2009).<sup>10</sup> Most recently, in 2009, the MOE reported to the president that, beginning in 2014, the number of listening comprehension items in the English test of the national college entrance exam will be increased from current 17 out of total 50 items (34%) to 25 (50%) (Yonhap News, 2009).

In summary, in the past two decades, the MOE has instituted several concerted efforts to bring fundamental reformation to English language education in the Korean EFL context. The reform efforts have been motivated by socio-political as much as by educational concerns. The general direction of reforms in English language education has been toward the adoption of COA. Various policies and measures aimed to support and facilitate the reforms have been announced and put into practice. Among the major policies are attempts to change teaching methods (e.g., the recommendation of CLT, TEE, Task-based Teaching, Whole Language Approach), to change testing and evaluation methods (e.g., the introduction of listening test items into the college entrance examination, the development of a National Test of English Proficiency), and to

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<sup>10</sup> The TaLK program has its own Internet homepage (<http://talk.go.kr>). According to the description of eligibility and contract term listed in the homepage, applicants must a) be native English speakers from one of the following seven countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States and b) have completed at least two or more years of college education. Korean descendants with citizenships or legal residencies of one of the seven countries are also eligible. TaLK scholars receive monthly stipend (1,500,000 Korean Won), settlement subsidy (300,000 Korean Won), round-trip airfares, and health insurance coverage in return for their serving as assistant teacher, teaching English conversation classes in cooperation with Korean EFL teachers at rural primary (and secondary) schools either for six or 12 months.

The TaLK program appears to be similar to EPIK. The biggest difference between the two programs lies in the fact that the TaLK program targets native English-speaking college students who are interested in coming to Korea on scholarships, while the EPIK is geared to recruitment of professional teachers who are native English speakers.

provide environments that can facilitate COA-oriented English language education (e.g., the EEL policy, the increase of English conversation class hours, the EPIK, the TaLK program, reeducation programs for in-service EFL teachers, and the change of curricula of EFL teacher education programs).

Such reforms initiated by the MOE lead to fundamental questions: Have the MOE-initiated initiatives succeeded and do they show any potential to succeed? It must be repeated here that ESL/EFL teachers are principal players not only in teaching but also in implementing reforms in English language education. Their perceptions of the feasibility of reforms are crucial for the ultimate success of the reforms, and their perceptions can be influenced by their beliefs about ESL/EFL education. In other words, an essential perspective on the questions raised above can be found by investigating what Korean EFL teachers believe about English language education in the Korean context. For the reasons, it is important to investigate the relationship among Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education, their perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms, and their implementation of the reforms in their classroom teaching.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, a selected number of previous studies on (ESL/EFL) teachers' beliefs are reviewed. The purpose of the review is to survey literature that informs the research questions of the study. The main focus is on empirical studies of ESL/EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs.

According to K. Johnson (1994), three basic assumptions have been shared by research on teachers' beliefs: "First, teachers' beliefs influence both perception and judgment which, in turn, affects what teachers say and do in the classroom. Second, teachers' beliefs play a critical role in how teachers learn to teach, that is, how they interpret new information about learning and teaching and how that information is translated into classroom practices. Third, understanding teachers' beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices and professional teacher preparation programs" (p. 439). Adding further support, Allen (2002) proposes three reasons for the necessity of research on teachers' beliefs: "First, examining the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom actions can inform educational practices. Second, if teacher education is to have an impact on how prospective teachers will teach, it must engage participants in examining their beliefs. Third, attempts to implement new classroom practices without considering teachers' beliefs can lead to disappointing results" (p. 519). As these two studies indicate, research on teachers' beliefs has focused on their relationship to teaching practice, learning to teach (or teacher education), and perceptions of educational reforms.

Drawing on these assumptions and reasons suggested by K. Johnson (1994) and Allen (2002), the review in this chapter is organized around three main topics: a) teachers' beliefs and teaching practices, b) teachers' beliefs and teacher education, and c) teachers' beliefs and educational reforms. In addition, the review is divided into two parts. The first part includes a

review of studies on non-Korean teachers' beliefs, and the second part involves a review of studies focusing exclusively on Korean EFL teachers' beliefs.

### 3.1. Studies on teachers' beliefs

#### 3.1.1. Teachers' beliefs and teaching practices

Literature in teaching and teacher education is replete with research on teachers' beliefs. A number of studies have investigated the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. Underlying assumptions of research on teachers' beliefs are that the teacher should be the focus of research, that research into teachers' beliefs can contribute to a more realistic and comprehensive understanding of teaching, and that such understanding may contribute to change in teaching practices and even to change in teachers' beliefs if necessary.

Much research has addressed the relationship between ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. Several studies have reported significant interaction between teachers' beliefs and practices (Attardo & Brown, 2005; K. Johnson, 1992, 1994; Jones & Fong, 2007; Poynor, 2005; Richardson, 1996). K. Johnson (1992) first used surveys (i. e., a multidimensional Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) theoretical orientation profile) and lesson plan analyses in order to investigate 30 ESL teachers' theoretical beliefs about L2 teaching and learning. The results suggested that the majority of the teachers held clearly defined theoretical beliefs which reflected one of the three methodological approaches: function-based, skill-based, and rule-based approaches. Most of the teachers held theoretical beliefs related to the function-based approach, which was most popular at the time of the investigation. K. Johnson then observed classroom teaching of three teachers selected from the 30 participants on the basis of their different theoretical beliefs. That is, one was a teacher of the function-based approach, the second, of the skill-based approach, and the third, of the rule-based approach. The results of the

observation revealed that the three teachers' teaching practices were consistent with each teacher's theoretical orientation. K. Johnson's conclusion was clear: "Overall, the study supports the notion that ESL teachers teach in accordance with their theoretical beliefs" (p. 101).

Some studies, however, have often found that teachers' reported beliefs are inconsistent and do not always match their teaching practices. Van der Schaaf, Stokking, and Verloop (2008), for example, examine 18 Dutch teachers' pedagogical beliefs as described in their portfolios, their teaching practices as rated by two raters of the portfolios, and their teaching practices as evaluated by their 317 students in a questionnaire. Results indicate that the evidence about the correspondence between teachers' beliefs as described by themselves and their teaching practices as rated by the raters or evaluated by the students was mixed. To take just one example, the teachers professed that they preferred assisting students in teaching the students research skills, while the raters found they were talking most of the class hour (meaning they were controlling rather than assisting) and the students evaluated that their teachers hardly ever offered assistance in their classroom research activities.

Some other studies found that teachers often hold contrasting beliefs and use them to justify some inconsistencies in their teaching practices. Graden (1996), for instance, employed classroom observations (with field notes) and interviews to study the relationship between six French and Spanish teachers' reported beliefs and their observed practices in teaching reading in three American secondary schools. Results indicate the teachers believed that: a) reading proficiency is facilitated by providing students with frequent opportunities for reading practice, b) the use of the target language is preferable for reading instruction, and c) oral reading interferes with reading comprehension. However, in actual teaching, the teachers compromised these beliefs because of poor student performance. For example, in spite of their belief in the

need to use the target language, they often resorted to the learners' native language (English) to facilitate students' understanding of target languages (French or Spanish). Graden's conclusion was that the teachers subordinated the beliefs that they shared about reading instruction to their beliefs about the motivational needs of their students" (p. 393).

Constraints that lead to complex relationships between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices have also been investigated. For example, Jones and Fong (2007) interviewed 30 pre-service and 27 in-service Macau secondary EFL teachers and found that: a) all the participants studied under a traditional, teacher-centered, textbook-based, grammar-oriented, and examination-driven English education at high school; b) the experience the participants had as EFL learners played a significant role in the formation of their pedagogical beliefs, which tended to be teacher-centered, textbook-based, and grammar-oriented; c) most of them held to the previous beliefs in spite of their exposures to different teaching theories and methods (e.g., CLT) in their teacher education programs; and d) final shapes of their teaching were decided not simply by their beliefs but also by external constraints (e.g., the large class size, lack of time for preparation). That is, many of the teachers believed in the effectiveness of CLT but did not practice it in their teaching due to large-size classes.

Many studies have explored ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs with regard to specific curriculum areas, such as grammar, writing, and reading (S. Borg, 1998, 1999; Burns, 1992; Eisenstein-Ebsworth & Schweers, 1997; K. Johnson, 1992; Johnston & Goettsch, 2000; Schulz, 2001). Some of the studies have explored ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs about grammar instruction. Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers (1997) conducted a survey with a questionnaire and post-hoc interviews with 30 ESL teachers in New York City and another 30 EFL teachers in Puerto Rico. Among a number of findings, Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers found that almost all the Puerto



Rican teachers and two-thirds of New York teachers believed in some form of grammar teaching. Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers also found that reasons given for how and why grammar was taught were based mostly on teachers' own experiences as language learners and teachers. Similarly, in order to examine cultural differences in student and teacher perceptions of the role of grammar instruction, Schulz (2001) administered a questionnaire to 607 Colombian foreign language students and 122 of their teachers and 824 U.S. foreign language students and 92 of their teachers. Among the participants were 10 Colombian EFL teachers who were interviewed for additional data. Along with other topics, Schulz found that: a) the majority of teachers from both U.S. and Colombia believed that explicit grammar instruction was necessary in foreign language teaching and b) Colombian teachers believed more strongly in the positive role of explicit grammar instruction than their U.S. counterparts.

Other studies have investigated the impact of teachers' beliefs about grammar instruction on their classroom teaching. Johnston and Goettsch (2000) investigated four ESL teachers' beliefs about grammar instruction, using qualitative data collection methods (class observations and follow-up interviews). Johnston and Goettsch found that the teachers believed that a conscious conceptual grasp of the various grammatical points was necessary and beneficial, and this belief was reflected in their actual teaching of grammar. S. Borg (1998, 1999), too, employed interview and class observation techniques and investigated the relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and their English grammar instruction in Maltese EFL classrooms. Suggesting "teachers' personal pedagogical systems," a concept defined as "stores of beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes" (p. 9), S. Borg (1998) presented a case study of a native English-speaking teacher in a Maltese EFL classroom. The case study demonstrates that the teacher's belief in explicit grammar instruction, CLT, and student-centered grammar

instruction led him to a form of classroom instruction in which he based grammar work on students' grammar errors, encouraged students' participation in spontaneous discussions about grammatical points, varied the pace of the lesson, and attempted to raise students' awareness of grammar rules and features, among other findings. S. Borg also found that sources for the teacher's beliefs included his previous experiences as an L2 learner, as a student in a teacher education program, and as a teacher in the EFL classroom in Malta. S. Borg argued that this kind of research can provide "a vivid portrait of both teachers' action and their thinking that can serve as a catalyst for enabling teachers to examine their own teaching" (p. 32). However, S. Borg (1999) found that a more complex relationship than this exists between teachers' beliefs and their teaching. Through interviews and classroom observations of four native English-speaking EFL teachers in Malta, S. Borg (1999) found that the teachers' decisions about the use (or avoidance) of grammatical terminology were not related directly to beliefs they held about one particular issue. Rather, their instructional decisions resulted from complex interactions between the teachers' beliefs about the best way to learn grammar, their own knowledge of grammatical terminology, and their perceptions of students' knowledge and experience of grammatical terminology. For example, one teacher, Martha, had difficulties in learning her L1 and L2 grammars, was insecure of her explicit knowledge of grammar, was exposed to communicative language teaching, and believed that her students learned English better without explicit grammar instruction. This teacher tended to avoid the use of grammatical terminology in her teaching.

Still other studies have investigated ESL teachers' beliefs about writing instruction. Burns (1992), for example, employed class observations, interviews, and stimulated recalls to examine six ESL teachers' beliefs about writing instruction and the impact of the beliefs on their

ESL students' writing. Results suggest that: a) the teachers believed in the significance of both communicative competence and linguistic competence (grammatical competence in particular); b) they tended to use written language not as part of teaching writing but as part of showing the accurate use of correct pronunciation of spoken language; c) they emphasized the significance of increasing learners' confidence, practice, and repetition; d) they considered the establishment of a non-threatening classroom environment to be an important element of the language classroom; and e) they perceived themselves as managers of the classroom, as facilitators of classroom interactions, and as providers of classroom materials and resources. These beliefs interacted with each other in influencing the teachers' classroom instruction of writing, which was largely CLT-based.

To sum up, studies on ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs suggest a significant degree of interaction between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices, despite some inconsistencies between what they say they believe and what they actually do in their classroom teaching.

### 3.1.2. Teachers' beliefs and teacher education

Since the 1980s, teacher educators have come to recognize that prospective teachers enter teacher education programs with previously established beliefs about teaching and learning and that these beliefs form a filter through which they perceive, process, and put into practice information presented to them in the programs. Resnick (1989) suggests that underlying the interest in the relationship between teachers' beliefs and teacher education have been cognitive theories that view learning (to teach) as a constructivist process. This constructive process is influenced by an individual's existing understandings, beliefs, and preconceptions (cited in Richardson, 1996). That is, in the constructivist framework, prospective teachers' beliefs play a

significant role in shaping what they learn, and how they learn it, in teacher education and other forms of professional development programs.

According to Richardson (1996), studies of the issue have mostly been concerned with a) the influence of prospective teachers' beliefs on their learning to teach and b) the role of teacher education in changing those beliefs. Holt-Ryenolds (1992) argued that what prospective teachers learn in their teacher education programs is strongly influenced by their existing beliefs about teaching and learning. Similarly, in his review of 40 studies, Kagan (1992) found that: a) teachers bring to their teacher education programs strongly-developed beliefs about teaching and learning; b) these beliefs are conservative in that the role of the teacher is frequently viewed as that of a knowledge transmitter and information dispenser; c) the beliefs are highly resistant to change; and d) the beliefs serve as filters for new information in such a way that existing beliefs are frequently confirmed rather than confronted. However, empirical research on the influence of prospective teachers' beliefs on their learning to teach has been scarce.

Since the 1990s, researchers have explored ESL/EFL teacher education in different contexts (Freeman & Graves, 2004). These researchers have begun to recognize that ESL/EFL teachers are central to understanding and improving ESL/EFL education. They have also recognized that ESL/EFL teacher's beliefs represent an important construct we need to understand more fully in our efforts to set up more effective ESL/EFL teacher education programs. In their much-discussed call for a reconceptualization of the knowledge base of ESL teacher education, for example, Freeman and Johnson (1998) highlighted ESL teachers' beliefs as an important issue we need to understand in our effort to have a clearer appreciation for the complexity of ESL teaching and learning and to set up better ESL teacher education programs. Freeman and Johnson suggested that ESL teacher education should intervene in changing (pre-

service and in-service) teachers' beliefs if that is necessary for their professional development. To do so, Freeman and Johnson argued, ESL/EFL teacher education programs and teacher educators need to better appreciate and understand how their students/teachers develop beliefs and how such beliefs influence teaching practices. However, research on the impact of ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs on their learning to teach has been scarce.

In contrast, a number of studies have examined the role of teacher education in changing teachers' beliefs (Burgess, Turvey, & Quarshire, 2000; Donahue, 2003; Doyle, 1997; Grossman et al., 1989; K. Johnson, 1994; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; McDiarmid, 1992; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Nespior, 1987; Nettle, 1998; Peacock, 2001; Richardson, 1996; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). Some of these studies have argued for the positive role of teacher education program in changing teachers' beliefs. They often propose reflective approach as an effective way of changing teachers' beliefs. Richards and Lockhart (1994) define the reflective approach as an approach in which "teachers and student teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching" (p. 1). Richardson (1996) argues that "[b]eliefs are thought to drive actions; however, experiences and reflection on action may lead to change in and/or addition to beliefs" (p. 104), while Grossman et al. (1989) propose that "teacher educators must provide opportunities for prospective teachers to identify and examine the beliefs that they have about the content they teach" (p. 32). Donahue (2003), who observes that "teachers' beliefs influence the acceptance and uptake of new approaches, techniques, and activities, and therefore play an important part in teacher development" (p. 344), suggests that prospective teachers should be provided with a training course with "awareness-raising activities" in order to bring their beliefs out into the open, to challenge them or incorporate them into the course content, and to facilitate change (p. 345).

As for the role of ESL teacher education programs in changing ESL teachers' beliefs, K. Johnson (1994) suggests that ESL teacher education courses must recognize that teachers make sense of their course content by filtering it through their own belief systems and that teacher development programs should create opportunities for pre-service teachers to reflect on and confront their own beliefs about teachers and teaching.

Several studies have found empirical evidence for the positive impact of a reflective approach on changing prospective teachers' beliefs about teaching. Stuart and Thurlow (2000) used interview, questionnaires, and journal analyses to investigate the impact of a methodology class on 26 students in an education program at a college in England. In the study, the 26 prospective teachers brought to the teacher education program beliefs about math teaching and learning heavily influenced by their childhood experience. The explicit purpose of the class was to change the prospective teachers' beliefs by helping them reflect on their beliefs. Results indicated that at the end of the semester, most of the prospective teachers successfully reevaluated and changed their beliefs about teaching math. For example, they reflected on their commonly-held belief in the use of competition strategy, recognized some of its negative aspects, and discarded it afterward. Doyle (1997) investigated the impact of education programs on pre-service teachers' beliefs and found that pre-service teachers' beliefs changed from viewing teaching and learning as passive acts of teachers handing information to students to viewing teaching as facilitating and learning as change and growth. Two important influences on the change were experiences gained while teaching in the field and the teachers' abilities to reflect on and analyze their experiences. Length of time in a teacher education program and the amount of field experience were identified as important factors in assisting pre-service teachers in the development of their beliefs as they progress through teacher education programs. Doyle

suggested the need for teacher educators to encourage pre-service teachers to challenge their own beliefs when these beliefs contradict what they experience in the field. Thus, Doyle's conclusion was that that experience and reflection on field experiences may lead to changes, or addition to beliefs, and that teacher education programs need "to begin earlier and continue longer to support the change process in our pre-service teachers" (p. 529). Similarly, Burgess et al. (2000) provide empirical evidence for the effect of reflective approaches in changing teachers' beliefs. In their search for ways that an ESL teacher education program can support prospective teachers in their learning to teach grammar, Burgess et al. implemented a four-step training session. The session started with a self-evaluation step, in which participants were asked to reflect on their knowledge about grammar, on their prior experience as language learners, and on academic courses they took. In the second and third steps, the participants were given opportunities to increase their knowledge about grammar and to teach grammar as part of their practicum. In the final step, the participants were given opportunities to reflect on their teaching experiences and current beliefs about grammar instruction. Burgess et al.'s conclusion was that this "reflection-oriented" session was effective in changing student-teachers' beliefs about grammar instruction, improving their teaching methods, and above all increasing their confidence in being able to provide grammar instruction.

In contrast to preceding evidence for the possible positive role of teacher education in changing teachers' beliefs, other studies have found that some beliefs prospective teachers bring to their teacher education program are so strongly developed that they rarely change, forming obstacles to their learning to teach and other forms of professional development. For example, McDiarmid (1992) examined changes in teacher trainees' beliefs after their exposure to a one-week-long multicultural education module. The data McDiarmid analyzed was collected in a 4-

year longitudinal investigation of teacher education conducted by the National Center for Research on Teacher Education (NCRTE). NCRTE researchers followed a cohort of 110 trainees from their entrance to a Teacher Trainee Program provided by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) through their second year of teaching. The LAUSD program asked the teacher trainees to attend a Multicultural Week, a program designed to raise the teacher trainees' cultural awareness and promote their effective skills to deal with culturally diverse students. The NCRTE researchers administered a 306-item questionnaire to the entire cohort three times (at the beginning of the program, at the end of their first year of teaching, and during their second year), conducted interviews with 12 of them, and observed their classroom teaching twice. From the analysis of the resulting data, McDiarmid found few changes in the trainees' beliefs. His conclusion was that teachers' beliefs are extremely difficult to change. On the basis of the results from a field-based research (the Teacher Beliefs Study), which followed eight teachers taking a course at the teacher education program at the University of Texas at Austin, Nespor (1987) agreed that prospective teachers' beliefs are difficult to change. Nespor argued: "Prospective teachers' perceptions of and orientations to the knowledge they are presented with may be shaped by beliefs systems beyond the immediate influence of teacher educators" (p. 326). Nespor suggested that there could be "two lines of response" to this difficulty. The first is to transform teaching into "a set of well-defined tasks" and thus eliminate a possible role of beliefs in defining and shaping tasks. But this is not a desirable solution. A second line of response is to change (or reshape) teachers' beliefs by replacing them with new (or alternative) beliefs. However, the success of the second line cannot be predicted at the moment because we do not know much about how beliefs come into being and how they are supported or weakened, among others. Peacock (2001) reached a similar conclusion in his three-year investigation of the role of



a Hong Kong ESL teacher education program in changing 146 prospective ESL teachers' beliefs about ESL learning. Using Horwitz's Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), Peacock tracked changes in the teachers' beliefs from their first to third year at the program and found no significant changes. His conclusion was that beliefs held by the ESL teachers were "resistant to change" (p. 187).

In summary, studies have found that prospective (EFL) teachers bring to their teacher education programs previously established beliefs about teaching and learning, that the beliefs tend to be conservative, and that they are resistant to change. However, there has not been much empirical research on how prospective teachers' beliefs affect what they learn and how they learn it in their teacher education programs. Studies of the role of teacher education programs in changing (EFL) teachers' beliefs have produced mixed results. Some studies resulted in evidence for the positive role of teacher education in changing teachers' beliefs, and other studies showed evidence against such role of teacher education. Regardless of what their views of the role of teacher education, however, most of the studies support Peacock's (2001) claim that teacher education programs may have to make considerable efforts if they want to change any beliefs pre-service teachers may hold.

### 3.1.3. Teachers' beliefs and educational reforms

Allen (2002) argues that teachers' beliefs influence "how new information is perceived and whether it is accepted or rejected" (p. 520). That is, teachers' beliefs influence their perceptions of an educational reform. Allen's position indicates that teachers' beliefs may be closely related to the successful implementation of educational reforms. Accordingly, an increasing number of researchers have recognized the integral role that teachers' beliefs play in

educational reforms or curricular innovations, and have conducted investigations of the relationship of the two entities (Bailey, 1992).

Fox (1993), for example, employed a questionnaire to investigate changes in the beliefs held by 147 teaching assistants in French at 20 universities in the U.S. The teaching assistants were exposed to, trained in, and professed to adopt CLT. However, the results of the questionnaire indicated that the teaching assistants believed grammatical competence to be more significant than other competences (e.g., sociolinguistic competence or strategic competence). Such a belief did not match what CLT emphasizes. Fox found the reason for this mismatch in the teaching assistants' prior experiences as language learners, which were oriented to grammatical analysis and practice. In short, Fox found that teachers' beliefs influence their perceptions of particular theories and methods, and that these perceptions influence their actual teaching in the classroom. Fox added that such beliefs do not easily change over time. More recently, Könings, Brand-Gruwel, and Merriënboer (2007) investigated the relationship between successful implementation of a government-initiated educational reform and teachers' perceptions of the reform in the Netherlands. The reform, which was called the "Second Phase" at the time of the study, aimed to provide a "powerful learning environment" one that promotes students' self-directed learning, collaborative problem-solving skills, and interdisciplinary approaches to a given issue. This nature of the reform called for the role of the teacher "more as a coach and less as an instructor" (p. 988) and the much higher sensitivity of the teacher to students' individual progresses and problems. Könings et al. used a questionnaire to survey 142 secondary school teachers' perceptions of the reform. Among the findings, they found that the teachers in general perceived the reform negatively, that one of the reasons for the negative perception was the mismatch between what the teachers believed about student autonomy and what the reform

asked them to think about it, and that the negative perception was reflected in their teaching behavior. That is, the teachers believed that classroom instruction should be teacher-centered. This belief led to their negative perception of the reform which promoted a student-centered, student-directed learning environment. This negative perception in turn led to their less emphasis on productive learning demanded by the reform and more emphasis on reproductive learning which was consistent with their beliefs. The conclusion of Könings et al. was the same as that of Fox (1993): teachers' beliefs are "heavily resistant to change" (Könings et al., 2007. p. 995).

As briefly discussed in the introduction, increasing globalization has been matched by the increased importance of English in many EFL countries. Many of these EFL countries have adopted COA in general and CLT in particular, and the widespread adoption of COA/CLT has prompted many attempts to reform EFL education. For example, Japan has been attempting to reform its English education since the late 1980s. Typically, such reform efforts have included the introduction of CLT, among other innovations (Kubota, 1998; Savignon, 2003). China also began to reform its English education in the early 1990s, and the reform effort has resulted in more communication-oriented curricula as reflected in classroom teaching practices, textbooks, and tests (Zhu, 2003).

Educational reforms and curricular innovations prompted by the adoption of CLT in EFL countries have drawn considerable research interest, and much of the empirical research has focused on EFL teachers' perceptions of CLT and on the impact of teachers' perceptions on teaching practices. For example, Hiramatsu (2005), Matsuura, Chiba, and Hilderbrandt (2001), Sato (2002), and Wada (2002) investigated teachers' perceptions of CLT and the impact of their perceptions on teaching practices in the Japanese context; Anderson (1993) in the Chinese context; Carless (2006) in the Hong Kong context; Kirkgöz (2008) in the Turkish context;

Feryok (2008) in the Armenian context; and Nazari (2007) in the Iranian context. Results from these studies suggest that reforms prompted by the adoption of CLT in EFL countries have generally been difficult. For example, through observations and interviews of EFL teachers in a high school in Japan, Hiramatsu (2005) explored the impact of two reforms: the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program and the revision of the English curriculum. As mentioned earlier, the JET program invites native English-speaking college graduates from many different parts of the world to engage in assisting and team teaching with Japanese EFL teachers. The revision of the English curriculum, a more recent reform that went into effect in 1996, requires courses in oral communication. Hiramatsu found that although these reforms have had a significant impact on English language education which had traditionally been conducted in Japanese, movement toward communicative English language teaching has been difficult largely because of Japan's continued emphasis on high-stakes university entrance examinations in English, which focus on grammar and reading comprehension.

A general agreement among the studies was that EFL teachers' negative perceptions of CLT-related reforms were behind the difficulty of implementing those reforms and that their negative perceptions were closely related to constraints on the implementation of the reforms. The major constraints suggested by the studies include: a) teachers' traditional (that is, grammar-oriented, text-based, teacher-centered) teaching methods; b) teachers' low communicative competence or low oral English proficiency; c) large-size classes, d) the lack of authentic materials recommended by CLT; e) difficulties of evaluating students taught via CLT; and f) conflicts with the dominant grammar-based testing systems.

In sum, these studies suggest that (ESL/EFL) teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of a particular reform are central to the success of that reform. What remains largely unexplored is

the strong possibility that teachers' perceptions are influenced by their (previously existing) beliefs. How one perceives a reform in English language education is closely related to what one believes about English language education. Therefore, for a deeper and clearer understanding of the feasibility of a reform in English language education, it is essential to have an in-depth understanding of what (ESL/EFL) teachers bring to the table, that is, their beliefs.

### 3.2. Empirical studies on Korean EFL teachers' beliefs

Korean EFL teachers' beliefs have also drawn considerable research attention (see Table 3.1 for summaries of the studies reviewed here). It seems, however, that no study has investigated directly possible relationships between teachers' beliefs, their perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms, and their attempts to implement such reforms in their classroom teaching. A few available empirical studies have investigated Korean EFL teachers' beliefs, but without relating them to their perceptions or implementation of MOE-initiated reforms. For example K. J. Kim (2006) used a questionnaire in order to investigate beliefs about EFL education held by 29 NESIs and their 286 students at a Korean university. K. J. Kim found that beliefs of teachers and those of students are different in some areas. Among the differences was that students considered grammar, vocabulary, native-speaker-like pronunciation, translation ability, and cultural knowledge to be particularly important, whereas teachers did not believe so. K. J. Kim argued that such mismatches between beliefs held by teachers and students may have a negative impact on Korean students' learning of English.

In contrast to K. J. Kim's (2006) study, which may not be generalized to the Korean context because of its focus on native English-speaking EFL teachers, E. Kim (1997) and J. Choi (2008) focused on beliefs held by non-native English-speaking Korean EFL teachers. Employing a questionnaire with 17 questions, E. Kim (1997) investigated 166 Korean primary school EFL

teachers' beliefs about effective teaching. Results demonstrate that the teachers believed in the need to a) teach English through English, b) use small group work as a solution for the problem of large classes, and c) separate students into different classes according to their learning ability and progress. J. Choi (2008) interviewed 20 Korean pre-service EFL teachers to examine their beliefs about proficiency goals for secondary English language education. Among the findings were that the pre-service teachers believed in grammar-based, teacher-centered, and text-oriented teaching and learning. J. Choi argued that these beliefs led them to their negative perceptions of the "pro-communication policies" issued by the Korean MOE. J. Choi's suggestion was twofold: taking EFL teachers' beliefs into consideration in any attempt to revise the national curriculum and reinforcing English language training in EFL teacher education programs.

A number of studies have investigated conditions of EFL teacher education programs in Korea (Jo, 2008; E. Kim, 2008a; S. Kim, 1992; Y. Kim, 2003; Shiga, 2008). In her analysis of the curricula of five primary school EFL teacher education programs, for example, Y. Kim (2003) suggested that EFL teacher education programs should provide pre-service teachers with more courses related to English language and culture education. However, empirical studies on the relationship between Korean EFL teachers' beliefs and teacher education programs have been scarce. It seems that only two studies are currently available: H. Lee (2006) and E. Kim (2008b). H. Lee (2006) employed survey, interview, and observation techniques in order to investigate the role of an EFL teacher education program in changing 128 secondary school EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs and teaching practices, whereas E. Kim (2008b) carried out a detailed case study of the impact of a Korean EFL teacher's participation in several in-service teacher training programs on the teacher's pedagogical beliefs. Results of the two studies indicate that EFL teacher education programs did not play any significant role in changing

teachers' beliefs (or attitudes). The teacher in E. Kim's study, for example, showed no change in her beliefs, which was closely related to the grammar-translation methods (E. Kim, 2008b, p. 53) and, thus, her teaching practices in spite of her participation in several CLT-related in-service teacher training programs. Both studies also found that a major factor impeding the change was the testing systems in Korea, which have largely been grammar- and reading comprehension-oriented.

As in other EFL countries, the MOE-initiated reforms in Korea have drawn much research attention. The reforms have introduced various COA-related methods and policies such as, for example, CLT, TEE, EEL, cooperative teaching between native and nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers. CLT is considered essential to reforms of English language education in Korea. Accordingly, CLT-related reforms or innovations in particular have drawn considerable research interest. For example, S. Choi (2000) surveyed 97 Korean EFL teachers in order to investigate their beliefs about CLT and their practices of CLT-oriented methods and activities, while Li (1998) conducted a case study of 18 Korean secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions of CLT-based innovations. Most recently, Ahn (2009) investigated the extent to which the recommendations of the 7<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum, particularly CLT-oriented teaching and TEE, were instantiated in two teams of pre-service Korean EFL teachers' four-week practicum experiences at a middle school. Each team consisted of a mentor and two student teachers. Data were collected through one-to-three interviews of both mentors and student teachers, three-to-nine classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews, observations of daily team conferences, and content analysis of the pre-service teachers' 20-day journals and six lesson plans. Ahn's conclusion was that the extent to which the reform recommendations were embraced and enacted by the student teachers depended on the following factors: a) their

experiences as EFL/ESL learners, b) their “everyday concepts” about EFL teaching with which they entered the teacher education program, c) the mentors’ perceptions of and attitudes toward CLT and TEE, and d) institutional constraints (or “macro-structures” as Johnson (2009) calls them) such as pupils’ lack of classroom participation and a washback effect of grammar-focused, reading-based tests. For example, all four student teachers initially attempted to implement TEE, but as the practicum progressed, they tended to use English less and less. Their rationale for using English increasingly less was to help ensure appropriate participation from students who tended to remain passive.

A synthesis of these studies’ findings suggests that the implementation of CLT has been difficult in Korea due to several constraints. Among the constraints found by the two studies were: a) the mismatch between the grammar-oriented, text-based, and teacher-centered pedagogical beliefs held by Korean EFL teachers and the fluency-focused, communicative-activity-oriented, and student-centered teaching required by CLT, b) large class size, c) teachers’ (as well as students’) low English proficiency, d) lack of resources, and e) a washback effect of the current tests which place considerable emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. These constraints are consistent with those identified in other studies in different EFL contexts (Anderson, 1993; Feryok, 2008; Kirkgöz, 2008; Matsuura et al., 2001; Nazari, 2007; Sato, 2002; Wada, 2002). The three studies discussed above made several suggestions, but Li’s (1998) suggestions were more detailed: a) EFL teacher education programs in Korea should provide opportunities for teachers to revise and change their beliefs as well as to have more experience in CLT, b) reform agents must become better informed with respect to the beliefs teachers hold and how such beliefs may affect their perceptions of CLT-related innovations, and c) it is necessary to develop English teaching theories more appropriate and fine-tuned for the



Korean EFL context. Ahn (2009) added that, in order for new teachers to fully embrace and enact the mandates of the MOE-initiated reforms, macro-structures such as grammar-focused, reading-based tests and norms of schooling (students' passivity in particular) must change first.

Other studies investigated Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of a specific reform policy or measures. Kang (2008) and Son and Lee (2003), for example, explored Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of the TEE policy, which was introduced by the Korean MOE in order to facilitate students' exposure to English for the purpose of enhancing their acquisition of the ability to communicate in English. Paik (2005) and Park et al. (1997) examined Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of the EEL policy, while Choe (2005) investigated Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of the MOE's decision to introduce cooperative teaching between native and nonnative English-speaking teachers. What these studies found in common was that these particular reforms had not been successfully implemented, largely because Korean EFL teachers' perceived the reforms negatively and their negative perceptions were associated with constraints similar to those previously identified by S. Choi (2000) and Li (1998). For example, Son and Lee (2003) surveyed 270 Korean secondary school EFL teachers in order to examine their perceptions of the TEE policy. Results indicate that the teachers perceived the policy negatively and thus did not fully adopt it. The results also indicate that their negative perceptions were due to several constraints such as the teachers' serious doubt of the presumed benefits of the policy, their low English proficiency, their lack of training for TEE, and alleged low English proficiency of students. Son and Lee made suggestions which again were similar to those made by Li (1998): a) the inclusion of teachers' opinions into policy-making and b) the improvement of EFL teacher education programs in such a way that they can provide pre-service teachers with TEE training.

Table 3.1. *Empirical studies on the relationship between Korean EFL teachers' beliefs/perceptions, teacher education, and reforms*

Study	Focus	Data-collecting techniques	Findings and suggestions
Ahn (2009)	4 pre-service Korean EFL teachers' enactment of CLT and TEE during a 4-week practicum	- Interviews - Observations - Stimulated recalls - Content analysis of journals & lesson plans	The extent to which the reform recommendations were embraced and enacted by the students teachers depended on: a) their experiences as EFL/ESL learners; b) their "everyday concepts" about EFL teaching with which they entered the teacher education program; c) the mentors' perceptions of and attitudes toward CLT and TEE; and d) institutional constraints such as a washback effect of grammar-focused, reading-based tests.
Choe (2005)	4 Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of the role of native English-speaking EFL teachers	- Interviews - Observations - Informal dialogues	- The public preference of native English-speaking teachers contributed to a negative self-image of the Korean teachers. - This in part led to their perception of English as a threat to Korean language and culture.
J. Choi (2008)	20 Korean pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about proficiency goals for secondary English education	- Interviews - Questionnaire	- The pre-service teachers believed in grammar-based, teacher-centered, and text-oriented teaching. - These beliefs led to negative perceptions of CLT-related innovations and policies.
S. Choi (2000)	97 Korean in-service EFL teachers' perceptions of CLT	- Survey	- The teachers showed discrepancies between their positive perceptions of CLT-related innovations and their actual teaching practices.
Kang (2008)	A Korean EFL teacher's perception and implementation of the TEE policy	- Observations - Interviews	- The teacher did not adopt TEE fully for several reasons: low proficiency levels of students, large class size, etc. - Suggestion: search for a way to modify TEE to fit it in the Korean reality.
E. Kim (1997)	166 Korean in-service EFL teachers' beliefs about effective English teaching	- Survey	- The teachers believed in the need to teach English through English; to use small group works; and to divide students into different classes according to their proficiency levels.
E. Kim (2008b)	The role of EFL teacher education in changing a Korean teacher's beliefs	- Interviews - Observations	- No change was observed in the teacher's beliefs (grammar-translation) and thus teaching practices despite her participation in several in-service teacher training programs.
K. J. Kim (2006)	Beliefs held by 29 native English-speaking college instructors and their 286 Korean students	-Survey	- Mismatches existed between beliefs held by the native English teachers and those held by their students. - The mismatches may have a negative impact on Korean students' English learning.
H. Lee (2006)	The role of an EFL teacher education program in changing 4 teachers' attitudes and teaching practices	-Survey - Interviews - Analysis of reflective journals	- The teachers showed instructional and attitudinal changes, but the changes were short-lived. - A factor impeding change was the washback effect of the national college entrance exam.
Li (1998)	18 Korean secondary EFL teachers' perceived difficulties in implementing CLT	- Survey - Interviews	- The implementation of CLT has been difficult, due to various constraints: a) the mismatch between the grammar-oriented, text-based, and teacher-centered pedagogical beliefs held by Korean EFL teachers and the fluency-focused, communicative-activity-

			oriented, and student-centered teaching required by CLT, b) the large class size, c) teachers' low English proficiency, d) lack of resources, and e) washback effects of the existing testing systems which put much emphasis on usage and vocabulary. - Suggestions: a) provision of opportunities for more experiences with CLT, b) reform agents' serious study of teachers' beliefs and perceptions of CLT, and c) eventual development of English teaching theories that are more suitable for the EFL context.
Paik (2005)	Korean primary school teachers' perceptions of the EEL policy	- Interviews	- All the teachers negatively perceived the EEL policy (lack of preparation; students' increased dependence on commercial/private English educational services; and, growing stratification of educational experiences among students).
Park et al. (1997)	283 kindergarten EFL teachers' perceptions of the EEL policy	- Survey - Interviews (7 teachers)	- Most of the teachers perceive the EEL policy positively; those who were against the policy pointed to the lack of appropriate textbooks and materials and qualified teachers.
Son & Lee (2003)	270 secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions of TEE	- Survey	- Negative perceptions of the TEE policy for the following reasons: their low English proficiency, lack of training for TEE, and serious doubt of the presumed benefits of TEE. - Suggestions: incorporation of teachers' opinions into policy-making; reform of the assessment systems; and improvement of EFL teacher education programs.

### 3.3. Summary

Quite a few studies have investigated Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of a particular reform policy issued by the MOE and/or the relationship of the perceptions to their teaching practices. Three studies explored Korean EFL teachers' beliefs. The review of these studies provides a conceptual and methodological basis for the study. First of all, the studies have shown that Korean EFL teachers' beliefs tend to be teacher-centered, text-based, and grammar-oriented, that their beliefs do not change easily, and that the beliefs represent one of the major factors impeding the MOE's efforts to reform English language education. In other words, the studies indicate the significance of understanding Korean EFL teachers' beliefs. In particular, they suggest that Korean EFL teachers and their beliefs are central to the successful implementation of any educational reform. As Li (1998) argues, if teachers' beliefs do not easily change over

time and if teachers' beliefs can have a critical impact on any attempt to reform English language education in Korea, it is essential to understand them as much and as fully as possible.

At the same time, most of the studies reviewed here reveal some limitations. Three studies focus on Korean EFL teachers' beliefs. J. Choi (2008) investigated the beliefs 20 Korean teachers had about only one aspect of English language teaching, that is, the proficiency goal. E. Kim (1997) purported to investigate Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about effective teaching methods, but what she actually investigated was largely their self-evaluation of what they did in their classroom teaching. E. Kim (2008b) simply investigated a teacher's beliefs. Similarly, many of the studies focusing on English language education reforms in Korea (e.g., S. Choi, 2000; Kang, 2008; Paik, 2005; Park et al., 1997; Son & Lee, 2003) investigated just teacher-participants' perceptions of reforms, without relating them to the teacher-participants' beliefs.

Exploring perceptions only is insufficient for understanding factors related to the implementation of a reform because the success (or failure) of the reform depends on how much it is congruent with teachers' beliefs. That is, it is important to understand Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about various aspects of English language education and the relationship such beliefs have with respect to their perceptions of any proposed reform. This relationship between teachers' beliefs and their perceptions remains largely unexplored. Little attempt has been made to identify Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education in the Korean context and then investigate the relationship between these beliefs and teachers' perceptions of (or attitudes toward) educational reforms or curricular innovations. This line of research is important in that it provides us with information on the basis of which we can take appropriate measures to work with teachers' beliefs, and to change them as warranted or make additions to their beliefs if necessary. In addition, most of the studies did not pay serious attention to possible sources for

Korean EFL teachers' beliefs. As mentioned in the introduction, it is important to understand what might serve as sources for teachers' beliefs because such information may provide us with better insights into what to do when we need to act on or find ways to modify such the beliefs.

Furthermore, many of the studies that examine Korean EFL teachers are methodologically limited. Some studies only employed survey as a data collection technique (e.g., S. Choi, 2000; E. Kim, 1997; K. J. Kim, 2006; Son & Lee, 2003). Some other studies used interview techniques only (e.g., J. Choi, 2008; Paik, 2005). A few studies combined survey and interview techniques (e.g., H. Lee, 2006; Li, 1998; Park et al., 1997). These techniques, either individually or in combination, are insufficient when it comes to exploring teachers' beliefs. A more appropriate qualitative approach calls for methodological triangulation, that is, the use of diverse data collection and analysis techniques. The current study's concern for triangulation makes the additional use of classroom observation necessary when survey and interview techniques are used. Lack of such triangulation may undercut the validity of findings and thereby their implications (S. Borg, 2003). It seems that E. Kim (2008b) avoided all these limitations. E. Kim employed both interviews and class observations and focused on a Korean EFL teacher's beliefs. However, as she acknowledged, the study is restricted to one Korean EFL teacher, and thus it is questionable whether one would be able to generalize E. Kim's findings. One lesson that can be learned from E. Kim's study is the need to investigate beliefs held by a larger number of Korean EFL teachers from different regions and/or grade levels.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodological framework the present study employs. It first describes participants and procedures of their recruitment. The description is followed by a detailed description of the procedures and techniques of data collection. The chapter ends with an account of data analysis methods as well as ethical issues related to the study.

#### 4.1. Data collection techniques and procedures

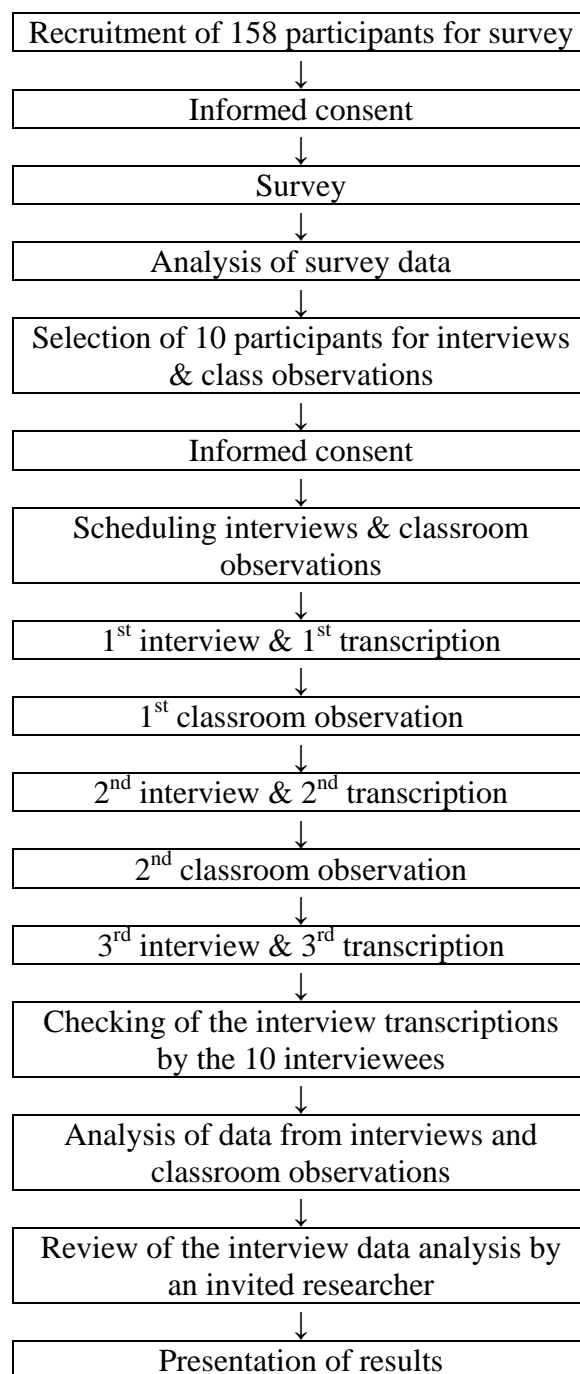
This study employs both qualitative and quantitative data collection (and analysis) methods. The selection of a research type depends on one's research interest. Qualitative research can be used to obtain in-depth information that may be difficult to generate through quantitative means. Hoepfl (1997) suggests eight characteristics of qualitative research. Among the characteristics are: a) holistic perspective: qualitative research aims at rich, in-depth description of events under study and b) inductive analysis: qualitative research tends to be interpretative, aiming at discovering meanings events have for those who experience them and at interpreting (by the researcher) those meanings. In particular, qualitative research seeks to answer questions about why people behave the way they do and how beliefs are formed. Moreover, qualitative research allows an understanding of behavior from the participants' own frames of reference (Baker, 2006; Duffy, 1987; Flick, 1998; K. Richards, 2003). Duffy (1987), for example, defines qualitative research as "a vehicle for studying the empirical world from the perspective of the subject, not the researcher" (p. 130).

These characteristics of qualitative research match this study's research purposes. The focus of the study is on the relationship among Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education, their perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms of English language

education, and the degrees to which they may actually implement the reforms in their classroom teaching. Pajares (1992) states that “beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do” (p. 207). Therefore, qualitative research methods and procedures were prioritized in this study. Among various qualitative data collecting tools, interview procedures were used as a primary data collection tool, and observation procedures served for the purpose of collecting complementing data.

The study also employed quantitative research techniques/instruments. The use of a quantitative instrument can make several contributions to qualitative research. According to Duffy (1987), three benefits may accrue from the use of a survey instrument in a qualitative research study: a) replies to a survey instrument can provide leads for subsequent interviews and observations; b) the use of a survey instrument that collects data from a large number of participants may serve to compensate the qualitative research problem of collecting data from a selected number of participants; and c) a survey instrument can eliminate the need to ask routine background information during an interview (p. 132). However, some legitimate concerns have been raised about survey research. Among them is a concern that what people believe and how they act or behave are often different from their related survey responses (Dörnyei, 2003; Foddy, 1993). It was hoped that this concern would be resolved through interviews and classroom observations.

In sum, three data collecting techniques and procedures are employed in the study. The flowchart in Figure 4.1 shows procedures of participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

Figure 4.1. *Flowchart of data collection and analysis*

#### 4.2. Participants

One hundred and fifty-eight Korean in-service EFL teachers participated in the survey. I recruited them at three in-service Korean EFL teacher education programs held at two



universities in Korea, at three primary schools I personally visited, and through my personal network. Of the 158 teacher participants, 121 were female and 37, male. Their average age was 36, ranging from 24 to 58. Thirty-two were in their twenties; 88, in their thirties; 28, in their forties; and 10, in their fifties. I decided to recruit in-service Korean EFL teachers from across three different levels of teaching, that is, primary, middle, and high schools. I made this decision in order to listen to diverse voices from various perspectives. Fifty-eight of the 158 participants were teaching English at primary schools; 50, at middle schools; and another 50, at high schools. Ninety-eight were teaching at schools located in metropolitan areas; and sixty, at schools located in non-metropolitan areas.<sup>11</sup> Their years of teaching experience varied from two months to 30 years, with the average teaching experience of 7 years. All but two of the 158 participants had at least a BA in English Education or other closely related majors such as Linguistics or English Language and Literature. The two participants' undergraduate majors were not related to English, but they attended graduate programs in English language education and received teaching licenses at the elementary school level.

Out of the 158 participants in the survey, 10 participants were recruited for interviews and classroom observations. In fact, the process of recruiting the participants was complicated. I initially recruited 153 teachers for the survey. From these participants, I intended to recruit all 10 participants for interviews and classroom observations. However, most of the survey participants declined my request. They thought that three interviews would be too much to fit into their busy lives. In particular (and likely for cultural reasons), they were very uncomfortable with the idea that someone would be present in their classrooms to observe their classroom teaching. As a result, I managed to recruit only five out of the 153 teacher participants. I recruited two more

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<sup>11</sup> Here metropolitan areas refer to Seoul and six other metropolitan cities in Korea. A metropolitan city has a population equal or greater than one million inhabitants.

teachers through my personal network. These two teachers were added to the participants for the survey. None of the seven participants for interviews and observations were primary school teachers. Therefore, I visited and called about 26 primary schools and eventually was able to recruit three primary school teachers. Again, these three primary school teachers were added to the participants for the survey, making the final number of teacher participants for the survey 158.

Table 4.1 presents background information of the 10 participants in interviews and classroom observations.<sup>12</sup> The 10 participants as a group can be described as well-trained and well-qualified group of Korean EFL teachers. Of the 10 participants, two were male, and eight were female. Their age ranged from 25 to 46, with the average age of 33.3. Three of the 10 participants were teaching at elementary schools; four, at middle schools; and three, at high schools. Their years of teaching English varied from two to 19 years, with the mean number of years teaching being five. Five of the participants received MAs in English Education or Educational Psychology, two were attending master's programs in English education at the time of the study. Two of the remaining three participants received BAs in English Education. The remaining participant received a BA in Social Studies Education from a university of education, which prepares students to become primary school teachers, and was teaching English at a primary school.

Moreover, seven of the 10 participants had experience in attending intensive English programs in the USA. The length of the intensive English programs they attended varied from one month to one year. Nancy attended a TESOL program for a year, while Julie went to a nine-month TESOL program and an intensive English program for six months. Both obtained a TESOL certificate. Page attended an intensive English program for a year, whereas Edward went

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<sup>12</sup> Because the primary readers of my dissertation are North Americans, for the ease of discussion and reading I used Anglo pseudonyms. I may use Korean pseudonyms when I have an opportunity to present either parts or the whole of this study to a Korean audience.

to a university in the Midwest as an exchange student and attended an intensive English program for six months. Betty, Henry, and Holly attended English programs for one to three months in the USA. Furthermore, all of the 10 participants had attended various domestic English programs for in-service Korean EFL teachers, some of which were mandatory. For example, Sally had to attend a 120-hour intensive English program in the first year of her teaching.

Table 4.1. *Background information of the 10 participants in interviews and observations*

<b>Participant pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender &amp; age</b>	<b>Major &amp; degree</b>	<b>Teaching level &amp; location of school</b>	<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>Overseas experience</b>
Betty	Female 41	MA in Edu. Psychology BA in English Lang. & Lit.	High school Non-metropolitan, southern part of Korea	9 years	3 months at an intensive English program (USA)
Edward	Male 29	BA in English Ed.	High school Metropolitan, central	2 years	6 months as an exchange student at a university (USA); 3 months at an intensive English program (Philippines)
Henry	Male 46	MA & BA in English Ed.	Middle school Non-metropolitan, mideast	19 years	1 month at an intensive English program (USA)
Holly	Female 41	MA in English Ed. BA in Landscape	Middle school Non-metropolitan, mideast	8 years	4 months at an intensive English program (USA)
Joy	Female 25	BA in English Ed.	Middle school Metropolitan, central	2 years	
Julie	Female 34	MA in English Ed. BA in English Lang. & Lit	Middle school Metropolitan, mideast	5 years	9 months at a TESOL certificate program ; 6 months at an intensive English program (USA)
Kay	Female 31	MA (in progress) & BA in English Ed.	Elementary school Metropolitan, Mideast	5 years	
Nancy	Female 32	MA & BA in English Ed.	High school Non-metropolitan, southern	7 years	1 year at a TESOL certificate program (USA)
Page	Female 26	MA (in progress) in English Ed. BA in English Lang. & Lit	Elementary school Non-metropolitan, central	2 years	1 year at an intensive English program (USA)
Sally	Female 28	BA in Social Studies Ed.	Elementary school Non-metropolitan, Mideast	4 years	

### 4.3. Data collection

#### 4.3.1. Survey

The first data collection procedure involved a quantitative instrument, that is, a questionnaire. In developing a questionnaire for the study, I referred to Dörnyei (2007), who provides guidelines for questionnaire construction, administration, and analysis. I also drew on questionnaires used in previous studies in their investigations of Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about (or attitudes toward or perceptions of) English language education (i.e., S. Choi, 2000; E. Kim, 1997; H. Lee, 2006). I further referred to questionnaires developed and used by Horwitz (1985) and Savignon and Wang (2003). Horwitz (1985) suggested a survey instrument, Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), which assesses second language (L2) teachers' (and students') beliefs in five areas: a) L2 learning aptitude, b) the difficulty of learning an L2, c) the nature of L2 learning process, d) learning strategies, and e) motivations of L2 learning. A number of studies on teachers' beliefs have drawn on BALLI (Horwitz, 1999). Savignon and Wang (2003) offer one of the most extensive questionnaires of this kind. Their questionnaire items address five areas of L2 learning. As with BALLI, many of the items are applicable to teachers' beliefs about English language education.

The questionnaire developed for the study consists of four sections (see Appendix A for an English version of the questionnaire). Five of the six items in section A are intended to gather background information on respondents. The remaining item measures respondents' beliefs about relative importance of English language skills and knowledge. The five items in section B investigate experiences of respondents as English language learners. These items are structured around a Likert-scale, from 1 for *strongly disagree* to 4 for *strongly agree*. Section C includes 34 Likert-scale items. Most of the items measure Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of the MOE-

initiated reforms and their beliefs in the following four areas of English language education: a) EFL teaching goals, b) teaching methods, c) Korean EFL teachers' roles, and d) assessment. The final section, section D, includes six open-ended questions, which are intended to generate respondents' descriptions of their thoughts about the importance of English language education, reflection of their teaching practices, degree of their familiarity with the MOE-initiated reforms, and their experiences of various seminars or English programs for in-service Korean EFL teachers.

To recruit participants for the survey, I visited three English programs for in-service EFL teachers held at two different universities. The programs were designed to increase in-service teachers' English proficiency as well as to expose them to new teaching methods, activities, and games. I first met the directors of the programs and obtained their permission. I then met teacher trainees, explained to them the goals of the study and the procedures related to the survey, and gave each of them a consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board of Georgia State University (see Appendix B for an English version of the consent form). In this way, I recruited 150 participants. I also recruited seven participants by personally visiting or calling 26 primary schools, and one participant by word of mouth. With these eight teachers, I repeated the same process as I did with the participants recruited from the three in-service English programs. In short, a total of 158 in-service teachers agreed to participate in the survey and signed the informed consent form.

At two of the three English programs I visited to recruit participants, the participants signed the consent form first and then completed the questionnaire. I remained with the participants to be available to respond to any questions they might have had, and then collected the forms when they finished. At the third program, an instructor in the program conducted the

process on behalf of me. She explained to the participants the purpose of the study and teachers' right that they could discontinue to participate in the survey at any time without losing any benefits. She gave each of the participants a consent form, asked them to sign it, and collected the signed consent forms. She then handed out the questionnaire to the teacher participants and gave them a day to fill out and return it to her. She gave them my phone number and e-mail address in case they had any questions. I visited the program the next day and collected the forms from the instructor. The seven participants I recruited by visiting or calling 26 primary schools and by word of mouth received both the consent form and the questionnaire through e-mail. They were asked to send the forms back to me through e-mail. I also asked them to call me or e-mail me if they had any questions.

Since the native language of all of the participants was Korean, in order to ensure their comfort and ease of communication, the questionnaire was given in Korean and participants were asked to respond in Korean. As soon as the completed questionnaire forms were collected, the participants' names were coded with a secure number system for subsequent reference. All of the participants were paid a modest stipend for their participation.

#### 4.3.2. Interview

The survey was followed by three interviews (and two class observations) in the study. Ten teachers selected as a subset from the 158 teachers who participated in the survey component of the study also participated in the interviews and observations. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define an interview as "a purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more, that is directed by one in order to get information from the other" (p. 93). Interviews are generally used to investigate research participants' insider perspectives on their thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Bartels, 2005).

Three categories of interviews are usually identified: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews. Unstructured interviews allow the interviewees to address their own concerns and interests without imposition by the interviewer. In highly structured interviews, in contrast, the interviewer asks each interviewee the same questions in the same way. Semi-structured interviews consist of a series of pre-planned open-ended questions based on the topic under investigation but provide opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to delve into some topics in more detail. This type of interview is flexible, allowing the interviewer the freedom to bring up new questions during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says or to ask the interviewee to elaborate a response (Kvale, 1996).

To allow for flexibility, semi-structured interviews were employed in this study. In semi-structured interviews, it is recommended that interviewers have an interview guide prepared. An interview guide is a grouping of topics and questions that an interviewer can ask in different ways for different participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). An interview guide was used in the study (see Appendix C). It was adapted from one used by S. Borg (1998, 1999). Although S. Borg's guide focused on the relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and their grammar instruction, the one used in this study focused on Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education in Korea and their perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms of English language education in Korea. In addition, outstanding issues and topics identified via the questionnaire, preceding interviews, and classroom observations were used to engage the participants in discussion of their beliefs, perceptions, and other related issues.

As mentioned above, 10 out of the 158 teacher survey-participants were selected for interviews and classroom observations. I arranged individual meetings with all of these 10 participants before starting interview. In the meetings, I repeated the "informed consent"



procedures. I explained to the participants the purposes and procedures of the study as well as their rights to discontinue participating in the study without losing any benefits and asked them to sign the informed consent form approved by the Institutional Board of Georgia State University (see Appendix D). I then arranged dates for three interviews (and two classroom observations). They were paid for their participation in the three interviews.

Nine of the 10 participants were interviewed three times, with each interview lasting from 60 to 120 minutes. One participant was interviewed only twice due to an unexpected personal matter. The first interview was conducted before the first classroom observation began. This pre-observation interview aimed to establish an even fuller profile of each participant's educational background, previous experiences of EFL teaching and learning, and general beliefs about EFL education in Korea. Another purpose of the first interview was to establish an appropriate level of rapport with the participants. The second interview was conducted following the first classroom observation, and the final interview was conducted after the second classroom observation. These post-observation interviews were conducted two to five days after the observations. They were based largely on the interview guide questions, previous interviews, and key instructional episodes from the two classroom observations.

All but two interviews took place in the interviewees' schools. Two interviews took place in quiet coffee shops because special events were held at the teacher participants' schools. To help ensure that all participants could express their ideas and feelings as fully as possible, interviews were conducted in Korean, the first language shared by the researcher and the participants. All the interviews were audio-recorded with Olympus WS 110 Digital Voice Recorder. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim as soon as possible following each interview.

Some specialists suggest that efforts to investigate teachers' beliefs entail constructing an interpretation of others' interpretations and that thus the narrative that elucidates a teacher's beliefs should be co-constructed by the researcher and the participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991). Following this suggestion, I offered the participants full transcriptions of their interviews for verification and follow-up clarification. I also asked them to let me know whether there were any parts that they would prefer not be made public. Three participants (i.e., Betty, Nancy, and Sally) returned several clarifications and additional explanations, but none of them changed the data in any significant way.

#### 4.3.3. Observation

The same 10 teacher participants as in the interviews were observed as they were teaching their regular EFL classes. Eight of the 10 participants were observed twice. The remaining two teacher participants were observed only once. The two were teaching 12<sup>th</sup> graders, and 12<sup>th</sup>-graders do not have regular classes during the month of October in order to concentrate on the preparation for the college entrance exam in November. They also do not have regular classes after the national college entrance exam. As a result, the scheduling for the second observation became complicated. Therefore, I had to give up observing the two teacher participants' classes in order not to interfere with their students' preparation for the national college entrance exam.

Block (2000) raises a question about the general tendency to consider interviews as direct windows on the minds of interviewees. Block argues that interviews can be seen as "co-constructed discourse events" (p. 758). When interviews are conceptualized as co-constructions, "interview data are seen not as reflections of underlying memory but as voices adopted by research participants in response to the researcher's prompts and questions" (Block, 2000, p.

759). These voices may or may not be accurate representations of what the research participant actually thinks. For example, a participant may choose to say what she considers to be reasonable within the context in which the interview takes place, avoiding consciously or unconsciously what she really thinks or feels. This was one of the reasons why an observation method was included in the study.<sup>13</sup> In short, classroom observation was employed mainly as an additional data collection method.

Observation has played an important role in the history of qualitative research (Flick, 1998). The value of observation is that it permits researchers to study people in their natural environment, or in the context of an authentic educational environment, in order to understand issues and events from their perspective (Adler & Adler, 1998; Baker, 2006). More importantly, observation may enable the researcher to see things that participants themselves may be unaware of, or that they are unwilling to admit or discuss. In other words, observation data collection techniques allow researchers to verify directly whether or not teachers' reported beliefs match their teaching practices. The comparison of the data from interviews and the data from observations can check the consistency between what participants say they believe and their actual instructional behaviors as teachers in classroom settings. That is, one of the purposes of classroom observations in the study was to check the consistency between what participants said they believed about English language education and what they actually did in their classroom teaching. Another purpose was to see whether their classroom teaching reflected any of the MOE-initiated reforms as well as to gather information which can be used to prompt questions in follow-up interviews.

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<sup>13</sup> Baker (2006) points out that at least three labels have been used interchangeably: observation, participant observation, and ethnography (p. 172). The label 'observation' is used in this study, and it is used interchangeably with the label 'classroom observation' since all of the observations took place in classroom settings.

One way to differentiate types of observation is to consider the roles the researcher assumes in her observation. Baker (2006) identifies seven distinctive roles: a) nonparticipation, b) complete observer, c) observer-as-participant, d) moderate or peripheral membership, e) active participation (participant-as-observer, active membership), f) complete participation, and g) complete membership. Each of these roles characterizes observation differently. Among the seven distinct roles, I chose the complete observer role. In the complete observer role, the researcher is present on the scene but makes concerted efforts to be as unobtrusive as possible and interacts with participants as little as possible. This method of observation is sometimes called “neutral observation” (K. Richards, 2003). In the study, I observed the 10 participants’ regular classroom teachings through non-participant, descriptive observation.

According to Griffiee (2005a; 2005b), at least five tools for collecting data through observation are commonly used: note-taking, audio-recording, video-recording, creating seating charts, creating a teacher diary (or other forms of documentation). Among these tools, audio-recording and note-taking/field note were used in the classroom observations. As an integral part of classroom observation routine in the study, field notes were generated. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define field notes as “the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (pp. 107-108). The purpose of observing from this perspective is to generate descriptive data. Field notes usually include descriptions of setting, people, and activities; and direct quotations or the substance of what was said. Field notes can also feature the researcher’s comments on feelings, reactions, or initial interpretations. Moreover, Baker (2006) posits that field notes can be categorized as observational, method, theory, and personal (p. 183). Observational notes relate what the researcher actually saw, while method notes include strategies that were used or that

may be used in future observation. Theoretical notes include the researcher's interpretative attempts to attach meaning to what is observed, whereas personal notes include the researcher's feelings during the observation process.

The field notes I generated in the two classroom observations of each participant can be categorized as observational notes. I observed the four key features K. Richards (2003) suggested to be considered in observation: setting, systems, people, and behavior. To be more specific, the target elements of the classroom observations included: a) classroom settings, b) teaching goals, c) instructional contents, d) classroom activities, and e) interactions between teacher participants and their students. In addition, curriculum materials, instructional materials, teaching plans, homework, and tests were collected for further reference. Audio-recording was employed mainly to compensate for what note-taking might miss. An Olympus WS 110 Digital Voice Recorder was used for audio-recording.

In the observation and recording, I took appropriate steps and applied appropriate strategies to remain as unobtrusive as possible. For example, although all the participants consented to the audio-recording process and thus were fully aware that their teachings were audio-recorded, I tried hard not to let the recording process make the teacher participants uncomfortable or self-conscious. I placed the digital recorder in a location that was hardly noticeable to the teacher and took a seat somewhere in the back of the classroom. Some of the audio-recorded data was transcribed and used in identifying instructional episodes (S. Borg, 1998, 1999). These instructional episodes were used to develop follow-up questions for the next interviews.

There are criticisms leveled at observation as a data collection technique. As Flick (1998) points out, practices that seldom occur can be captured only with luck or, if at all, by a very

careful selection of situations of observation. According to K. Richards (2003), some participants' behaviors can be affected by the very presence of the researcher, and this leads to what is known as the reactivity effect, or the "observer's paradox": if people know they are being observed, they may not act normally (p. 108). Moreover, the researcher's gender, ethnicity, and class positionality may affect observation itself, behaviors of the participants, and, as a result, the quality of the collected data (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). In addition, Everston and Green (1986) list 17 sources of error that can occur in classroom observation. Among them is the observer's bias. Observers have their own beliefs and expectations which necessarily influence the observation effort. Clearly, there are challenges in learning how to be an objective observer and not to mix descriptive observation with evaluation and opinion (Griffie, 2005a; 2005b). It was hoped that some of these criticisms, particularly limitations on the observer's ability to observe all aspects of people's behavior, could be supplemented by interview and survey research procedures employed in the study.

#### 4.4. Data analysis

Data analysis in the study involved data collected through the questionnaire conducted with 158 teacher participants and data collected through three interviews and two classroom observations conducted with 10 teacher participants. The data collected with the questionnaire included both quantitative and qualitative data because the questionnaire consisted of both quantitative and qualitative items.

Two kinds of data analysis were conducted: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data analysis component was applied to the data collected through the 39 Likert-scale items in the second and third sections of the questionnaire. Responses to these items were numerically coded (i.e., strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1). Participants'

responses to the 39 items were analyzed descriptively. According to Dörnyei (2007), the “measures of central tendency” and the “measures of variability” are the two main categories of descriptive statistics (p. 213). The measures of central tendency include mean, median, and mode, while the measures of variability include range and variance (or the standard deviation). In the study, mean scores and the standard deviations were computed. These numbers were used to show overall trends in the 158 Korean EFL participant teachers’ responses.

Among the remaining items on the questionnaire, items A1 to A5 related to background information on the participants, which has already been presented in the participants section of this chapter. Item A6 relates to ranking relative usefulness of English language skills and knowledge. In the analysis of the participants’ responses to this item, percentage of participants who showed similar responses were calculated and reported.

Qualitative data analysis involves the process of breaking down and reconstructing the information gathered in order to make sense of the data. It addresses “the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them” (Richards, 2003, p. 270). Qualitative data analysis was applied both in the analysis of the responses to the six open-ended questions in Section D and in the analysis of the data collected from interviews and observations.

In the analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions, the participants’ responses, which were written in Korean, were compressed into core concepts.<sup>14</sup> A participant wrote, for

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<sup>14</sup> The use of three terms – core concepts, codes, and themes – must be noted here. In the general literature, these three terms may be used interchangeably. But, in the study, I use them for different occasions. First, I use the term, “core concepts,” when I explain the analysis of the 158 participants’ written responses to six open-ended questions of the questionnaire. Here the term refers to significant ideas that are repeated in the participants’ written responses. I use the term, “codes,” when I explain the analysis of the interview data. I use this term to refer to the codes I listed on the “start list of codes” or patterns I identified in the interview data that seemed to be significant. In contrast, I use the term, “themes,” when I refer to significant patterns I found occurring repeatedly in the interview data. Thus, the main difference between codes and themes is that codes relate to the initial stage of analysis of the interview data, and themes relate to the final.

example: “English language education is important because English is a language many people use to communicate with foreigners.” This written response was compressed into a core concept, “international language.” This means that the participants thought that English language education is important because English is used internationally. Then the frequency of written responses which included similar and/or same core concepts was counted. I translated the resulting core concepts into English and reported the results. The results from the six open-ended questions were often referred to in the discussion of the results from the interview (and observation) data.

Qualitative data analysis was also applied to the interview data. To be more specific, thematic analysis was employed. Braun and Clarke (2006) present thematic analysis as “a foundational method for qualitative analysis” (p. 78) and define it as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns [themes] within data” (p. 79). Thematic analysis consists of several stages of multiple readings of the qualitative data, coding, and categorizing emerging patterns or themes. Braun and Clarke provide a guideline for thematic analysis which consists of six phases: a) familiarizing with data, b) generating initial codes, c) searching for themes, d) reviewing themes, e) defining and naming themes, and g) producing the report. The initial phase of thematic analysis involves transcribing data, reading and rereading the data, and noting down initial ideas. The second phase involves codes which identify “a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The rest of the phases involve sorting different codes into potential themes and subthemes, refining and defining the themes, and finally analyzing them and writing up the report. Here themes refer to patterns identified in the data. These phases are applied not in a linear but in a cyclic format.



In the analysis of qualitative data, I followed this six-phase framework. I recursively read through and coded data. Coding can be performed either manually or with the added support of a software program. I coded manually. In addition, I used a “start list.” The use of a “start list” has been employed effectively in previous studies of ESL/EFL teachers’ beliefs. For example, S. Borg (1998) used a start list in his initial coding of data and eventually refined it into a “structured list” of categories. I developed a start list of codes by drawing on the theoretical discussion of teachers’ beliefs, overview of the MOE-initiated reforms, and research questions discussed earlier in this study (see Appendix E). I used the start list of codes in the initial analysis of the responses to the open-ended items on the questionnaire and the first two or three interview transcripts. During this stage of the analysis, the codes were modified and used in the subsequent analysis of interview transcripts.

In analyzing interview data, I followed the six-phase framework Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested. I read transcripts repeatedly and highlighted in color the parts that appeared to be relevant. I then cut the highlighted parts out and pasted them on index cards. I consulted the start list of codes and put a relevant “code” on the upper right hand corner of each index card (see Appendix F). I identified recurrent codes. In the case of the examples in Appendix F, the recurrent code was *fluency as teaching goal*. As I went through the index cards marked with this code, I modified this initially identified code into a theme, the *primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English*. This theme (with other identified themes) was then subsumed under a category, *beliefs about EFL education in Korea* (see Table 5.12). In presenting and discussing themes, I quoted from the parts pasted on index cards and translated the quoted parts into English. I repeated the process until I covered all the transcripts.

Through these procedures, recurrent themes were identified with respect to four areas of concern tied to the research questions: the relationship among a) Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education, b) the sources of the beliefs, c) their perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms, and d) other issues, including degrees of their implementation of the reforms in classroom teaching. The recurrent themes were then subsumed under several main categories. In addition, the analysis procedures were applied in a cyclic format. I analyzed data already collected as I was continuing to collect new data. Thus, the constant comparison with the newly gathered data led to modifications of initial codes and categories, and guided the following data collection.

In the thematic analysis of the study, the promotion of descriptive validity through the decrease of researcher bias was one of the concerns. R. Johnson (1997) defines descriptive validity as "the factual accuracy of the account as reported by the researchers" (p. 284). For the promotion of descriptive validity, R. Johnson suggests investigator triangulation. According to Duffy (1987), who suggests four types of triangulation (i.e., data triangulation, theoretical triangulation, methodological triangulation, and investigator triangulation), investigator triangulation is realized when research is conducted by several independent researchers.

In order to address the potential problem of researcher bias, a Korean EFL researcher was invited to assist me in coding the interview data. This second researcher-collaborator had previously earned a master's degree in TESOL in the USA and a doctoral degree in English Language Education in Korea. She was teaching at a university located in the southern part of Korea. She was very interested in Korean EFL teachers' beliefs and along with the impact of their beliefs on teaching practices.

The researcher-collaborator was already very familiar with procedures of thematic analysis, so we agreed that a data analysis training phase would be unnecessary. Instead, we participated in an informal session in which we talked about this study's research questions, a definition of teachers' beliefs as used in this study, data collection and analysis procedures presented in Figure 4.1, the selection of 10 teachers for interviews, my experiences with interviews (and class observations) as well as with the transcription of the interviews. I provided her with the start list of codes and asked her to code the transcriptions of the first 10 interviews (33% of all the collected interview data). As for the inter-coder reliability, we agreed with each other for over 80% of the shared coding data. Whenever there were disagreements, we reviewed the parts in question and resolved our disagreements. In addition, whenever I was not sure how to categorize as I analyzed the data from the second and third interviews, I consulted her and used categories we both agreed upon. Though I extended the offer, the researcher who assisted me declined to be compensated for her work.

All interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed in Korean. However, the entire transcriptions were not translated into English. Instead, for the purposes of discussion and illustration, only selected passages from the transcriptions were translated into English. I did the translation. I tried to retain as much the flavor and intention of what the interviewees said as possible, rather than attempting a literal translation. For the purpose of verification, the translations were reviewed by a Korean professor who received a doctoral degree in English from a university in the USA and, at the time of the research, was teaching at a university located in the southeastern part of Korea. The professor had experience in translating English into Korean and vice versa, publishing four academic translations.

Some of the data generated from observation with field notes was also analyzed in order to identify instructional episodes which would be used to develop follow-up questions for interviews as well as to obtain additional information on the relationship between the participants' beliefs, perceptions (and degrees) of implementation of the MOE-initiated reforms, and their teaching practices. The main focus of the observation data analysis was on checking whether or not what the participants said was consistent with what they did in the classroom and, if not, why not. Thus, field notes were categorized based on teaching goals and methods, classroom activities, and interactions between teachers and students, among others.

#### 4.5. Ethical issues

There are many ethical issues to be taken into serious consideration for research. In the course of research, I followed the ethical guidelines suggested by Christians (2005) and Georgia State University's Institutional Review Board to protect the rights of the participants. In particular, I kept in mind four issues: voluntary participation and informed consent, confidentiality, reciprocity, and researcher bias.

First, I tried to honor the rights of the participants throughout the data collection procedures. I explained them the purposes of the research, the necessity and procedure of their participation, the risk involved in their participation, and the use and security of their data. I also informed them that they should participate on the voluntary basis and could withdraw from the research for any reason, at any time, and at no disadvantage. I gave them an opportunity to check whether their statements were correctly recorded and transcribed. Second, I tried to protect privacy and confidentiality of the participants. I secured their anonymity by using pseudonyms for their names, names of their schools, and locations of the schools. I assured them that identifying data would not be made available to anyone who is not directly involved in the study.

I also informed them that I would not use any information in the research if they did not want. All the teacher participants received the transcriptions of their interviews and were asked to inform me if there was any part they did not want to get identified in public. Third, I tried to treat the participants as human beings, not simply as the subjects of my research. I worked conscientiously to try to establish appropriate rapport with the participants and to attend to their sensitivities. Moreover, I tried to maintain a spirit of reciprocity between the participants and the researcher. Because, as a researcher, I expected to benefit from the study, I wanted the participants to also benefit from the study. Therefore, I compensated them modestly for their participation in survey and interviews. In addition, I shared my knowledge with the participating Korean EFL teachers as much as I could, but not until a late stage of the study because I did not want the sharing to influence their responses to the questionnaire and interviews. Finally, researcher bias is a potential problem no matter what research method is employed. The problem of researcher bias becomes more significant when a study involves an analysis of descriptive nature like the current study with thematic analysis. To counter potential researcher bias, as I have explained above, I invited a Korean EFL researcher to assist me in coding the interview data. This strategy of investigator triangulation was intended to mitigate some of the inevitable researcher biases and, thus, to better ensure that I might not miss important themes.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reports on and discusses the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the collected data. It starts by reporting on and discussing the results from the survey data. It then moves on to results from the interview and classroom observation data. The chapter ends with a summary that synthesizes findings from the analysis of the survey data and those from the analysis of the interview and observation data.

#### 5.1. Survey

In reporting the results from the data collected through the questionnaire, the results from 39 Likert-scale items on the questionnaire are first presented and discussed. Then the results from the remaining items, especially those from the six open-ended questions, are reported on and discussed. The items were randomized when the actual survey version was prepared. Therefore, in order to make a more effective presentation of the results, items measuring similar or contrasting information were grouped together. It must be noted that the main interest of the analysis was to check how closely the teacher participants' beliefs, perceptions, and practices came to COA recommended by the MOE in its efforts to reform English language education in Korea.

Items B7 to B11 relate to the participants' experiences as EFL learners in the secondary school. Table 5.1 reports the results. Clearly, the majority of the participants judged that the style of English language teaching they experienced as EFL learners in their secondary schools reflected traditional methods of instruction based on GRA. They strongly agreed that their English learning was grammar-focused ( $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = .526$  on a scale of 1 to 4), that their secondary English teachers put considerable emphasis on grammatical knowledge ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD$

= .611), and that their secondary English teachers mostly used Korean as the language of instruction ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = .409$ ). In contrast, they strongly disagreed that their English learning in the secondary school was communication-oriented ( $M = 1.23$ ,  $SD = .464$ ) or that their secondary English teachers provided communicative activities in class ( $M = 1.22$ ,  $SD = .525$ ). The results indicate that the participants' secondary school experience of English language learning was mostly GRA-based and rarely COA-based.

Table 5.1. *Experiences as EFL learners in the secondary school*

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
B7	When I was a secondary school student, learning English was mostly grammar-focused.	3.70	.526
B8	My secondary school English teachers put much emphasis on grammatical knowledge.	3.58	.611
B9	My secondary school English teachers mostly spoke Korean in class.	3.87	.409
B10	When I was a secondary school student, learning English was mostly communication-focused.	1.23	.464
B11	My secondary school English teachers often designed activities to have us interact in English with peers.	1.22	.525

Items C1 to C34 concern Korean EFL teaching goals, teaching methods, teachers' roles (or teacher-centeredness vs. learner-centeredness), learner characteristics, and assessment as well as Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of or attitudes toward English and MOE-initiated reforms. First of all, the participants' responses to item C1, "*Learning English is important for Koreans,*" reveal highly positive attitudes towards the importance of English. Forty-four per cent of the 158 participants strongly agreed; 49%, agreed; and the remaining 7% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that learning English is important for Koreans ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = .633$ ).

Items C2 to C9 relate to EFL teaching goals. Among them, items C2 to C4 address the relative primacy of English language skills. Items C5 and C6 concern GRA-based teaching goals, whereas items C7 to C9 relates to COA-based teaching goals. The results are reported in 5.2.

Table 5.2. *Responses to teaching-goal-related items*

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
C2	Speaking skills are more useful than reading skills in learning English.	3.13	.780
C3	Listening comprehension skills are more useful than translation skills in learning English.	3.27	.700
C4	Spoken communication skills (e.g., speaking, listening) are more important than written communication skills (e.g., reading, writing).	3.03	.777
C5	The goal of English teaching should be preparing students to read passages in English and translate them into their native language effectively.	1.89	.745
C6	In the EFL classroom, accuracy should be emphasized.	2.13	.702
C7	The goal of English teaching should be preparing students to communicate with foreigners in English.	3.33	.700
C8	In the EFL classroom, fluency should be emphasized.	3.18	.756
C9	Fluency needs to be more emphasized than accuracy in the EFL classroom.	3.29	.641

The results indicate that the majority of the teacher participants judged spoken communication skills to be more useful (and, thus, more important) than written communication skills. This is summarily represented by the participants' response to item C4, "*Spoken communication skills (e.g., speaking, listening) are more important than written communication skills (e.g., reading, writing),*" ( $M = 3.03$ ,  $SD = .777$ ). The results also reveal that the participants agree that English teaching should be COA-based rather than GRA-based. This is illustrated in the participants' responses to item C9, "*Fluency needs to be more emphasized than accuracy in the EFL classroom,*" ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .641$ ). In sum, responses to items C2 to C9 show the majority of the participants to believe that the goal of EFL teaching should be the ability to communicate in spoken English and that EFL teaching should aim for fluency rather than accuracy.

The next group of items concern EFL teaching methods and practices (i.e., what it means to teach/learn English and how to go about it). Among the 10 items, six (C10 to C15) are often considered to be characteristics of the traditional GRA to English language teaching, whereas the



remaining four (C16 to C19) are considered to be characteristics of the typical COA to English language teaching. The results are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. *Responses to items concerning teaching methods or practices*

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
C10	Practicing grammar patterns is an important part of English learning.	2.63	.735
C11	Memorizing new vocabulary words is an important part of English learning.	2.95	.701
C12	In learning English, it is important for learners to repeat and practice a lot.	2.87	.738
C13	The more English grammar rules a student learns, the better she is at speaking English.	2.25	.731
C14	The more words a student memorizes, the better she is at speaking English.	2.65	.701
C15	Teachers need to follow the textbook.	2.16	.682
C16	It is important to practice English in real-life-like situations.	3.41	.640
C17	Practicing English in communicative activities is essential to eventual mastery of English.	3.10	.679
C18	Students can improve their English by speaking English with their classmates in the classroom.	3.11	.644
C19	Pair and small group activities are important for students to improve their English.	3.21	.649

Results from the six GRA-related items reveal that the participants were less positive about GRA.

An exception was their responses to item C11, “*Memorizing new vocabulary words is an important part of English learning,*” which showed more positive agreement ( $M = 2.92$ ). But the participants’ responses to the remaining items (i.e., C10, C12 to C15) were less positive. In contrast, the results from the four COA-related items indicate that a majority of the participants believed in the importance of COA. They agreed that practicing English in real-life-like situations is important ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = .64$ ). They also agreed that communicative activities and group activities are important part of English teaching and learning ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $3.21$ ;  $SD = .679$ ,  $.649$  respectively), and that students can improve their English by speaking English with classmates ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = .644$ ).

In sum, the results reveal that the participants agreed with COA with its characteristic employment of interactive, communicative, group, or pair activities. In contrast, the participants’

responses were divided almost evenly with regard to GRA with its typical practices and activities such as repetitive drills, grammar explanations, rote learning of new vocabulary words, and textbook-based teaching. About half of the participants agreed that GRA is important, but the other half did not.

The next set of items addresses Korean EFL teachers' roles (C20 to C23). Among the items, C20 and C21 are considered to be related to teacher-centeredness, whereas C22 and C23, to student-centeredness. Table 5.4 presents the results.

Table 5.4. *Responses to items related to teacher-centeredness vs. student-centeredness*

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
C20	English language education must focus on what teachers think students have to learn.	2.96	.611
C21	Teachers need to have a firm control over the entire classroom.	2.45	.753
C22	English language education must meet students' needs.	3.32	.629
C23	Teachers need to pay attention to students' interests.	3.46	.548

The results indicate that the participants were divided in their responses to the teacher-centeredness items. The participants were more positive about the statement of item C20, “*English language education must focus on what teachers think students have to learn*” (M = 2.96, SD = .611), than that of item C21, “*Teachers need to have a firm control over the entire classroom*” (M = 2.45, SD = .753). In contrast, results from the learner-centeredness items clearly show the majority of the participants to agree with item C22, “*English language education must meet students' needs,*” (M=3.32, SD = .629) and with item C23, “*Teachers need to pay attention to students' interests,*” (M = 3.46, SD = .548). The results indicate that the majority of the teacher participants had more affinity for a student-centered approach than a teacher-centered approach to EFL teaching. Teacher-centered teaching is often considered to be a characteristic of GRA, whereas the learner-centered teaching is a part of COA.

So far, results from items related to teaching goals (C2 to C9), teaching methods or practices (C10 to C19), and the issue of teacher-centeredness vs. student-centeredness (C20 to C23) have been reported. The results indicate that the teacher participants' beliefs are largely based on COA with characteristics such as focus on fluency, emphasis on speaking proficiency, employment of interactive and group activities, and student-centered teaching.

The next group of items (C24 to C26) concern assessment issues. The results are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5. *Responses to assessment-related items*

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
C24	The current system of English proficiency assessment has a great influence on teaching English in the classroom.	2.79	1.01
C25	The current format of the English portion of the national college entrance exam (or College Scholastic Aptitude Test) needs to change.	3.25	.771
C26	No effective means of assessing students' oral communication skills is available now.	3.15	.815

Responses to item C24 reveal that the participants were less positive about the influence of the current proficiency assessment system on their teaching practices ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ).

However, the participants agreed with the statement of item C25, "*The current format of the English portion in the national college entrance exam needs to change,*" ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = .771$ )

and with the statement of item C26, "No effective means of assessing students' oral communication skills is available now," ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = .815$ ). In sum, a majority of the participants agreed that the current format of the English section in the national college entrance exam must change and that an effective means of assessing students' oral communication skills is not currently available. The majority of the participants were not satisfied with (and thus expected change in) the national college entrance exam as well as with the current proficiency assessment system.

The final set of items is related to the MOE-initiated reforms. The results are reported in Table 5.6. The results show that teacher participants agreed to the statements of four items (C27, C28, C29, and C30), but they were less positive about the statements of the other four items (C31, C32, C33, and C34).

Table 5.6. *Responses to items related to the MOE-initiated reforms*

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
C27	A smaller size class is better for EFL teaching than a larger size.	3.80	.591
C28	It is important to expose students to native English speakers.	3.31	.697
C29	Teachers need to be fluent in spoken English in order to teach effectively.	3.32	.598
C30	It is easier for children than adults to learn English.	3.35	.722
C31	It is important to speak English with a native-like accent.	2.55	.728
C32	In English class, students and teacher must use English only.	2.25	.684
C33	English language education should begin in the primary school or earlier.	2.21	.855
C34	I am familiar with the government-initiated reforms.	2.49	.820

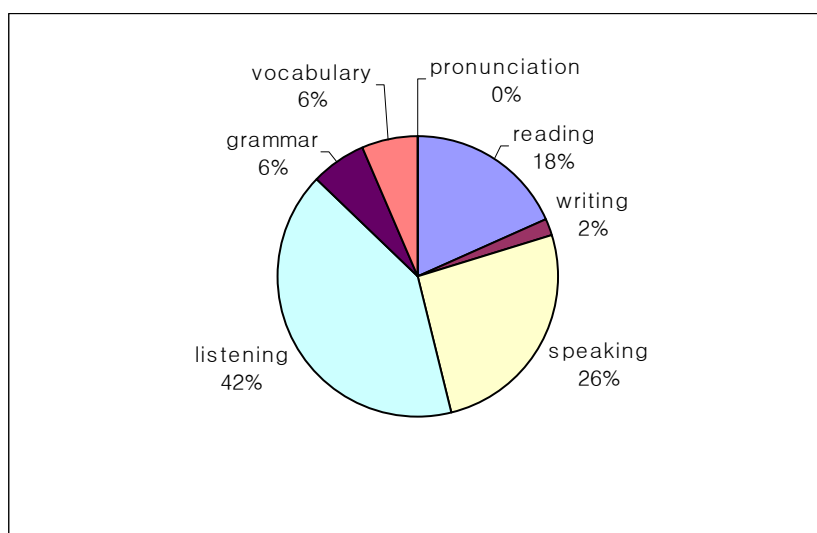
As for item C27, participants agreed that a smaller size class is better for teaching than a larger size class ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = .591$ ). The participants did not show much agreement on item C31, “*It is important to speak English with a native-like accent*,” ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = .728$ ). But they agreed with item C28, “*It is important to expose students to native English speakers*,” ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = .697$ ). This statement is related to the team teaching policy as well as EPIK and TaLK programs whose purposes are to recruit native English speakers for the policy. Therefore, it is likely that the participants’ perceptions of the team teaching policy are positive.

Item C29 relates to an expectation created by the MOE-initiated reforms’ emphasis on COA to English language teaching, that is, expectation of EFL teachers’ high English speaking proficiency. Participants agreed that high English speaking fluency is necessary for effective EFL teaching ( $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = .598$ ). Items C30 and C33 appear to be logically related to each

other. Item C30 relates to a belief that it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language (English in this case). Item C33 reiterates the point of the MOE's Early English Learning EEL policy, "English language education should begin in the primary school or earlier." The participants agreed with item C30 ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = .722$ ), but they were less positive about the statement of item 33 ( $M = 2.12$ ,  $SD = .855$ ). Item C32 relates to the TEE policy which recommends the use of English as a medium of instruction. The participants were less positive about the exclusive use of English in English classes ( $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = .684$ ). This result indicates that the participants' perception of the TEE policy was not much positive. The last Likert-scale item, item C34, relates to the degree of the participants' familiarity with the MOE-initiated reforms. About the statement, the participants were less positive ( $M = 2.49$ ,  $SD = .820$ ).

In the remaining items of the questionnaire, item A6 asked the participants to rank the relative usefulness of skills and areas in learning English language. The results are summarized in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Skill areas teachers reported as most useful (n=158)



The results indicate that, as the most useful skill or area, 42% of the participants selected listening skills; 26% speaking skills; and 18% reading skills. In short, the majority of the participants (68% in total) selected spoken communication skills (i.e., speaking and listening skills) to be central to learning English.

The questionnaire also includes five open-ended questions. The participants' responses to the questions were compressed into core concepts, and the frequencies of responses which included similar and/or same core concepts were added up to compute the frequency of the core concept.

The first of the five questions (D1) concerns why English language education is important in Korea. The results show that all the participants agreed that English language education is important. The reasons provided were almost uniform. As Table 5.7 shows, the most frequently listed reasons are tied to the importance of the role of English as an international lingua franca and its accompanying instrumental values in international business, information collection, overseas travel, and communication with foreigners in the age of globalization.

Table 5.7. *Reasons listed most for learning English: primary*

Core concept	Written responses	Frequency
English is an international lingua franca.	Important for meeting challenges of globalization.	64
	Communicating with foreigners while traveling, etc.	45
	Important for gathering information, academic activities, etc.	38
	Important for conducting international business.	23
	Important because it is an international language.	25
	Total	195 times

The next most frequently listed reasons were concerned with the important role of English in Koreans' lives and its accompanying benefits in college entrance, employment, promotion, and other forms of evaluation (see Table 5.8).

Table 5.8. *Reasons listed for learning English: additional*

Core concept	Written responses	Frequency
English plays an important role in Koreans' lives.	Decisive role of English in employment and promotion	55
	Decisive role of English in college entrance	54
	Importance of English for one's future	25
	Great value attached to English ability by the society	8
	Frequent use of English ability as an indicator of one's overall capability.	6
Total		148 times

In sum, in their responses to item D1, the participants wrote that English language education is important for Koreans either because of English's role as an international language or because of its decisive role in Koreans' lives.

The second open-ended question (D2) addresses teaching methods/approaches the participants employed in their teaching of English. Some of the participants misunderstood the question and listed specific games and activities. In such cases, whenever possible, games and activities were linked to methods/approaches. For example, when a participant wrote that she used a role play, it was linked to COA. Moreover, some participants listed more than one method to make the point that they were trying to introduce variety in their teaching. In this case, listed methods were counted separately (this is the reason why the total frequency in Table 5.9 exceeds the total number of the participants, 158). Furthermore, some others wrote both the Grammar-Translation approach and CLT to make the point that they were trying to use a variety of methods/approaches. A typical example for this came from a participant who wrote: "I use both the traditional grammar-focused method and the communicative language teaching." Again, in this case, each method was counted separately.

The participants' responses to item D2 reveal that they were familiar with a variety of language teaching methods/approaches (see Table 5.9).

Table 5.9. *Teaching methods*

Teaching method/approach	Frequency of listing
Grammar-Translation	114 times
CLT	88
Audio-lingual	27
Task-based	7
Whole language	6
Total Physical Response	5
Content-based	1
Lexical	1
Natural	1
Notional-functional	1

Methods and approaches the participants listed included the Grammar-Translation Approach, the Audiolingual Method, CLT, Task-based Teaching, Content-based Instruction, Total Physical Response, Whole Language, the Lexical Approach, and the Natural Approach. This list covers almost all of the methods and approaches listed and discussed by Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Celce-Murcia (2001). Both are widely used methods texts. Among these methods and approaches, the Grammar-Translation Approach was listed 114 times; CLT 88 times; the Audiolingual Method 27 times; the Task-based Teaching seven times; and the Whole Language six times. The results indicate that the participants most frequently cited the Grammar-Translation Approach as the approach/method they employed in their classroom teaching of English.<sup>15</sup>

The third open-ended question, D3, relates to the degree of participants' familiarity with the MOE-initiated reforms. Seven of the participants provided no response, and 22 participants responded that they did not know much about the reforms. Interestingly, 11 participants used the opportunity to criticize the MOE's reform efforts. For example, one participant wrote: "*Any and*

<sup>15</sup> Whether the Grammar-Translation method cited by the participants meant GRA is not clear. The impression is that they used the term because they were familiar with the term, and they frequently emphasized grammatical issues and almost always translated English sentences into Korean in their instructions.



*all efforts to reform English language education are futile as long as the current national college entrance exam exists.” Another participant insisted: “The reforms are the brainchildren of megalomaniac educational administrators and professors who do know anything about the realities of English language education in Korea.”*

Responses from the remaining 118 participants indicate that they were familiar not only with the main direction of the reforms but also with the major reform policies and measures taken by the MOE to support the policies. The participants used such expressions as “communication-centered teaching and learning of English,” “emphasis on English speaking and listening skills,” “improvement of English conversation ability,” and “increase of class hours for English conversation.” These expressions indicate that the participants were well aware that the focus of the MOE-initiated reforms was on the development of communicative competence, particularly the ability to communicate in spoken English, through COA to English language teaching.

The participants listed a number of policies, measures, and programs they were aware of. Among the most frequently mentioned were the introduction of an English conversation instructor system (47 times), the development of a national test of English proficiency (34 times), the TEE policy (28 times), the EPIK program (20 times), the provision of various in-service English training programs (18 times), the EEL policy (17 times), and the tentative plan to introduce English immersion education (16 times). Other policies and programs mentioned by the participants included the TaLK program, the revision of EFL teacher education programs’ curricula, the revision of the employment exam for public EFL teacher positions, and the tentative plan to provide differential instructions for students with different proficiency levels, among others. These (and other) policies and measures listed by the participants covered almost

all the policies and measures summarized in Table 2.1. These results indicate that most of the participants were well aware of and quite familiar with the MOE's efforts to reform English language education in Korea.

Item D4 relates to the MOE's efforts to reeducate in-service Korea EFL teachers for English education reforms. In fact, the MOE has been offering various English programs for in-service teachers. Two types of English programs have been offered: general English programs and intensive English programs. General English programs include English language instructional methods and conversational English classes, whereas intensive English programs focus more on spoken communication skills. Intensive English programs are offered either domestically or abroad. Short-term overseas intensive English programs are selectively offered to Korean EFL teachers based on their teaching experiences and English proficiency. The overseas intensive English programs vary from four weeks to six months in duration and take place in the U.S., Canada, Australia, or England.

Item D4 asks whether participants have had any opportunities to attend seminars or other programs intended to provide information on MOE-initiated reforms or to receive training related to the reforms and, if they had, what they were like. Of the 158 participants, 109 reported that they had not attended any seminar or received any training except the three English programs for in-service teachers they were attending when the survey was conducted. Thus, 69% of the participants had not had opportunities to become better informed of the reforms nor were they trained in preparation for the reforms. Of the remaining 49 participants, 17 (11%) reported that they had attended seminars or other forms of meeting held to inform attendants of MOE-initiated reforms. These participants attended seminars or meetings related to the TEE policy, the English immersion education policy, the EPIK program, the differential instruction policy, and

the general direction of English language education reforms led by the current government. The other 32 participants (20%) reported that they had attended various programs designed to improve their English proficiency or teaching skills. In sum, the results indicate that for a majority of the teacher participants, opportunities to attend reform-related seminars or programs had been limited.

Item D5 is related to item D4. Item D5 asks, if participants' answers to item D4 are *yes*, whether the seminars or in-service teacher education programs they have attended or received have had any impact on their classroom teaching practices. Of the 49 participants whose answers to the question of item D4 were positive, eight (16%) did not respond; nine (18%) responded negatively; and the remaining 32 (66%) responded positively. Negative responses included that the seminars or in-service teacher education programs had little impact on classroom teaching. Many of the positive responses stated that teacher participants tried to use some of the ideas, methods, and activities they learned in the programs they attended in their classroom teaching or tried to change their teaching goals toward the direction of which they were informed in the seminars. However, five of the 32 positive respondents watered down their positive statements, pointing to the educational realities that often neutralize their attempts to employ the ideas, methods, or activities they learned from the training programs they attended. A representative example came from a male teacher (participant #32) who was teaching at a non-metropolitan high school. He wrote: *"I agree with and, thus, tried to use the methods I have learned at the in-service teacher program, but the realities of the educational site force me to teach as usual."* In sum, it can be said that various programs provided by the MOE (or local offices of education) for in-service Korean EFL teachers had impact on those who attended the programs. However, even the influence was frequently neutralized by the educational realities the participants had to live

with, such as teaching geared to the national college entrance exam or low English proficiency of teachers themselves.

The last open-ended question (D6) asks the participants to list three to four things they urgently needed in order to improve or change their teaching of English in the classroom. Again, participants' responses were compressed into core concepts, and the frequency of a core concept was computed by adding up the frequencies of the responses which involved the same core concept. Table 5.10 shows an example. The table lists four different expressions participants used to report a same (or at least similar) concept, *increase of their English proficiency*. The frequency of this *core* concept, or concern, was computed by adding up the frequencies of the four expressions.

Table 5.10. *What participants reported to improve their teaching: primary concerns*

Core concept	Various expressions	Frequency
Increase of English proficiency	Speaking English with native-like accent	29
	Improving speaking and listening skills	28
	Improving English ability	26
	Holding more confidence in English ability	3
	Total	86 times

This concern with their English proficiency (speaking proficiency in particular) was the most frequently cited concern.

Table 5.11 below shows the second most frequently reported concern, which was related to improvement of their English teaching skills. This second most frequently reported concern was followed by other concerns such as reduction of class size (40 times), reduction of teaching and administrative work load and increase of time for class preparation and individual professional development (25 times), provision of more communication-oriented textbooks and supporting materials (24 times), innovation of the testing system (23 times), more opportunities

for in-service teacher education programs designed to improve in-service teachers' English proficiency (13 times), and establishment of "English-friendly" environment (10 times).

Table 5.11. *What participants reported to improve their teaching: other concerns*

Core concept	Various expressions	Frequency
Improvement of English teaching skills	Learning effective teaching methods	40
	Learning how to motivate students to learn English	9
	Changing toward teaching based on COA	4
	Having more opportunities to observe other teachers' classroom teaching	3
	Others	5
Total		61 times

In sum, under the pressure of the MOE-initiated reforms, the participants were concerned with their own English proficiency, teaching methods and skills, large class size, and overload of teaching and administrative work, innovation of testing system, among others.

The results of the survey discussed above can be summarized into the following seven major findings.

- 1) The participants' attitudes toward English language education were highly positive (results from items C1 and D1). Drawing on an econocultural model (Bhatt, 2001), the participants found the importance of English language education either in the role of English as an international lingua franca or in its decisive role in Koreans' lives.<sup>16</sup> This finding is consistent with the generally positive (in fact enthusiastic) attitudes toward English learning in Korean society as a whole (Shim, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> According to Bhatt (2001), the econocultural model refers to the importance of English as the language of global commerce, politics, and cultural activities (p. 532). In addition, Brutt-Griffler (1998) argues that, with England and the United States as the epicenter of the industrial capitalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and of the postcapitalism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is inevitable that the general competence of English in political, economic, social, and cultural fields is important.

- 2) The participants' beliefs were largely based on COA with emphasis on spoken communication ability and skills, fluency, student-centered teaching, and employment of interactive, communicative, and group activities (results from items A6, C2 to C23).
- 3) The participants' experiences of English language learning in their secondary schools were overwhelmingly GRA-based and rarely COA-based (results from items B7 to B11).
- 4) The participants' most frequently cited classroom teaching methods and practices were generally based on GRA (results from item D2).
- 5) A majority of the participants reported that they were familiar with the MOE's efforts to reform English language education (results from items C27 to C34 and D3). But their perceptions of individual policies or measures appeared to be mixed. For example, on the basis of their responses to item 28, it can be assumed that the majority of the participants positively perceived the team teaching policy through which native English speakers are employed. In contrast, the participants' responses to item 32 seem to indicate that their perception of the TEE policy was not positive at all.

It seems logical to assume that, some one who believes in child age superiority in learning English would agree with the policy of starting English language instruction earlier or with EEL policy. However, the majority of the teacher participants believed in child age superiority in learning English but were opposed to the EEL policy. This inconsistency appears to have been caused by the final word of the statement of item C33, *“English language education should begin in the primary school or earlier.”* It seems that most of the participants agreed that English language education should begin in the elementary school, but not earlier than that. Another possible explanation for the inconsistency is that the participants believed in child age superiority in learning English

but were much concerned over the EEL policy for some reasons. In any case, the inconsistency needs to be more fully explored in the interview data analysis.

6) Most of the participants felt that the opportunities for them to be reeducated in preparation for the MOE-initiated reforms had been limited (results from items D4 and D5). At the same time, the participants who had been given opportunities to attend seminars and other forms of program orientation reported that the programs they attended exerted considerable influence on their beliefs and practices, but such influences were frequently neutralized by the educational realities they had to live with, such as teaching to the test (in this case, the national college entrance exam) or low English proficiency of teachers themselves.

7) The participants were very concerned over their lack of English proficiency (speaking proficiency in particular), large classes, overload of teaching and administrative work, and the washback effect of the current GRA-based format of the English section in the national college entrance exam, among others (results from items C24 to C27, C31, and D6). These targets of their concerns are representative realities of the English language education in Korea. Such realities might have been responsible for the gaps or mismatches between the participants' reported beliefs, practices, and perceptions. For example, the persistent impact of GRA on the participants' teaching methods may be traced back to a washback effect related to the national college entrance exam. Many of the participants put their COA-based beliefs on hold, complied with the demands of the national college entrance exam in order to maximize their students' scores on the exam, and employed GRA-based teaching methods. Similarly, their concern with their English

proficiency might have been one of the reasons for their negative perception of the TEE policy (stated in item C30).

These findings point to the issues and areas which need to be attended to in the analysis of the interview and observation data. In particular, careful attention must be paid to four issues that stand out in the findings. First, there is a mismatch between the participants' reported beliefs and their most-frequently-cited teaching methods and practices. Second, there is a gap between the participants' reported beliefs and their experiences as EFL learners at secondary schools. Third, the participants negatively perceived some of the MOE-initiated reforms, which seemed to contradict some of their COA-based beliefs (e.g., TEE). Fourth, the realities the participants were concerned with might have functioned as constraints on the realization of their COA-based beliefs as well as the implementation of the MOE-initiated reforms. These issues need to be explained more clearly in the analysis of the interview and observation data.

## 5.2. Interview and classroom observation

In reporting the results from the interview and the classroom observation data, the focus of analysis is on the data collected through interviews. Some of the information collected through classroom observations is incorporated into the discussion of the themes and related issues. A separate, brief discussion of the observation data is also added.

### 5.2.1. Themes identified in the interview data

The 10 teacher participants/interviewees made rich and articulate responses in the interviews. From the interview data, a number of recurrent themes were identified. The recurrent themes were subsumed under four categories, which were aligned with the four research questions of this study: a) beliefs about EFL education in Korea, b) sources of the beliefs, c) perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms, and d) constraints on the implementation of reform



policies and measures. Table 5.12 reports the recurrent themes subsumed under the four categories.

Table 5.12. *Themes identified in the interview data*

Category	Theme
1. Beliefs about EFL education in Korea	a) primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English b) necessity of oral tests c) teacher's role as a motivator d) importance of teachers' pronunciation e) importance of grammar and vocabulary
2. Sources of the beliefs	a) strongest impact of experience at overseas English programs b) significant influence of in-service teacher education programs c) teaching experience as a wake-up call for the challenging realities d) secondary schooling experience as a negative model
3. Perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms	a) positive perception of the general move toward COA b) significance of starting English language education earlier c) importance of exposure to native English speakers d) lack of consideration of readiness of both students and teachers e) threat to the vested interest of in-service teachers f) poor preparation of reform-related measures g) lack of adequate/practical supports
4. Constraints on the implementation of reforms policies and measures	a) washback effect of the national college entrance exam b) overload of teaching and administrative work c) large classes

### 1) Beliefs about EFL education in Korea

The first group of themes relates to the 10 teacher participants' beliefs about English language education in the Korean context. Five recurrent themes were identified: a) the primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English, b) the necessity of oral tests, c) the teacher's role as a motivator, d) the importance of teachers' pronunciation, and e) the importance of grammar and vocabulary.

#### *The primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English*

As a goal of EFL education in Korea, the teacher participants cited learner ability to communicate in spoken English most frequently. Participants used various expressions in their statements about the goal. Julie simply said that "English education should focus on students' ability to speak English" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 24, 2009), whereas Sally insisted that "we should know that learning English means learning to speak English, and that should be the goal

of English teaching” (1<sup>st</sup> interview, September 18, 2009). Henry stated that students should learn to use “practical English” (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009). Betty used the term, fluency, in her description of the teaching goal: “I believe the most important thing is to be able to speak English without fear of errors, that is, fluency” (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 3, 2009).

In their statements of the goal, some teacher participants relied on the English as an international language or English as a lingua franca discourse as well as on globalization discourse. Joy argued that the goal of English language education should be “the ability to command everyday English.” She then added: “English is a language used world-wide and thus learning to speak it well will provide students with opportunities . . . or help them to survive in the age of globalization” (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, October 9, 2009). Page agreed with Joy, making the following statement:

The kernel of the problem is why Koreans can’t speak English despite studying English for more than 10 years. . . . English language education must change. If you have high speaking proficiency, then you have more opportunities in this age of globalization because English is an international language. The goal of English education in Korea should be to help students develop the ability to speak English well. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, Nov, 8, 2009)

Sally too agreed but with a serious reservation. Sally emphasized that “English is an international language and, thus, it’s very important to learn to speak English fluently” (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009). She continued:

Although the ability to speak English is useful for the purpose of communication with people with different linguistic backgrounds, all Korean students shouldn’t be forced to learn to speak English fluently. Learning to speak English well requires a tremendous

amount of effort due to the great differences between the two languages, Korean and English. All Koreans' learning to speak English well isn't necessary. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009)

In contrast to their clear-cut representation of the ability to communicate in spoken English as the goal of English education in Korea, most of the teacher participants were rather vague about the extent of such ability. Kay formulated this issue into a rhetorical question.

The goal of English language education is to teach basic expressions that can be used in everyday life. However, can you tell me what "basic expressions" are? Who decides which expressions are basic? (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 17, 2009)

Ironically, Kay's answer to her own question continued to be vague: "I'd just say the goal should be the learner's ability to converse in English with foreigners without much difficulty" (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 17, 2009). It was not clear what Kay meant by the phrase, "without much difficulty." Likewise, Sally simply said: "The goal of English teaching in Korea should be learner ability to have basic conversation in English with foreigners" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009). Henry described the goal as "the ability to have basic conversation in English with foreigners without fear" (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, August 15, 2009). Joy stated that what she meant by the ability to command everyday English was "the ability to have a conversation of an appropriate level" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, October, 9, 2009), whereas Betty put it as "conversing with foreigners without difficulty" (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 3, 2009).

Not all of the teacher participants believed that the ability to communicate in spoken English should be the goal of English language education in Korea. Edward argued that, although he personally believed in the importance of the ability to speak English well, putting too much emphasis on the speaking ability was not desirable in the Korean context. For him,

Koreans were learning English not as a tool but as a subject. Thus, the amount of knowledge of the subject (English) affected Korean students' future in terms of college entrance, employment, or promotion.

As a teacher, I just regard English as just another subject to be taught and learned. I teach English just like you teach math or biology. That's the goal I have as an English teacher in Korea. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, October 29, 2009)

In this situation, Edward insisted, highlighting the ability to speak English well did not make much sense. Holly and Nancy believed that, in the Korean context with its unique realities, the reading ability should be the goal. Nancy argued that, in the input-limited Korean context, developing the speaking ability is hard and expensive and, thus, the ability to read and comprehend English effectively should be the goal:

The four skills are all important. Considering the realities that English language education faces in Korea, however, reading ability should be the goal. You can do reading easily anywhere in Korea. It doesn't require native English-speaking instructors. It doesn't require much investment. But it has the greatest usefulness. . . . Reading ability also has a positive impact on speaking and listening abilities. . . . Reading is the cheapest but most useful skill in the Korean context. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 23, 2009)

Similarly, Holly insisted that "more emphasis should be put on written English and reading than on spoken English and speaking" (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009). She continued:

In Korea, you don't have many opportunities to use the speaking ability. In contrast, you have unlimited opportunities to use the reading ability in Korea. You can use the reading ability in finding information for research, reading novels for pleasure, or reading a manual to operate a MP3 you've bought, for example. In our everyday life in Korea, the

ability to read and comprehend English is far more useful and, thus, more important than the ability to speak English well. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009)

These results indicate that the majority of the teacher participants believed the EFL teaching goal to be learner ability to communicate in spoken English. This ability, or the speaking proficiency, is what the MOE has been emphasizing in its reforms efforts. Three participants drew on the realities of English language education in Korea in their argument for the ability to read and comprehend English effectively.

#### *The necessity of oral tests*

Most of the participants believed that one of the best ways to assess students' abilities to communicate in English is to give them oral tests. Julie's statement was typical.

If you want to emphasize the ability to communicate in spoken English, you need to develop oral tests that can adequately assess such an ability. A lack of such tests or inconsistency between the administration of tests that are not based on COA and the emphasis on teaching based on COA drives both students and teachers toward reading and grammar. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009)

As Julie's statement implies, the belief in the importance of oral tests led to a concern with the unavailability of effective and efficient ready-made oral tests. Some of the teacher participants reported that they often had to design their own. However, they did not know how to develop effective and efficient oral tests, and, if they knew, they often did not have time to do so due to heavy teaching and administrative workloads, as Joy explained.

I tried to develop test items to evaluate students' abilities to communicate in English, but it was difficult. . . . I don't know how to develop effective and reliable oral tests. I have little knowledge of test development or design. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 24, 2009)

This belief in the importance of oral tests led to a concern for a washback effect of exams and large classes. Joy noted: “With about 40 students, giving oral tests is just unthinkable even if you know how to develop them . . . . Moreover, students are just interested in doing well on national achievement tests that are reading-based” (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009). Other teacher participants (e.g. Edward and Nancy) expressed similar concerns: the difficulty of administering oral tests in large classes and students’ overriding concerns with the largely GRA-based national college entrance exam and other tests similar to the exam in format.

*The teacher’s role as a motivator*

Regardless of their beliefs about the goal of English language education in Korea, all 10 teacher participants believed that the Korean EFL teacher’s primary role is to motivate students to learn English, especially to develop students’ ability to communicate in spoken English. The following statement made by Joy was typical:

A primary role of the teacher is to motivate students to learn English, to make students interested in learning English. When students are motivated, half of the goal of a class is achieved even before the class begins. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009)

As implied in Joy’s statement, most of the teacher participants emphasized intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and highlighted the significance of fostering and maintaining students’ interest in learning English. Reporting that she had been looking for a more effective way of motivating students, Sally emphasized the significance of increasing student interest in English:

I think it’s critical to ensure that students not get overwhelmed by but interested in learning English. Getting them interested in learning English is important not only at the elementary level but also at the secondary level. Fostering interest among students is one

of the most important things teachers have to do in their EFL teaching. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009)

Page used the term *fun* to present a similar idea:

These days, good teachers are those who know how to make students have fun. That's what I've heard and learned by experience. What counts is not to teach the way I want, or to teach as much as I plan, but to make students laugh and learn, to make them say that they have a lot of fun. One of my colleagues told me, "Let them have some fun. That's what you should do." (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009)

These participants also believed that interactive and group activities are essential for arousing student interest as well as for developing the ability to communicate in spoken English.

Sally argued for the importance of classroom activities:

First of all, learning a language means learning speaking and listening. Children in particular are more interested in speaking and listening than reading and writing. . . .  
Second, they have much more fun in doing activities designed for speaking and listening.  
(2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009)

Page agreed with Sally about the importance of activities:

It's critical to keep students interested in learning English. For that purpose, interactive activities, role plays, and games are the best. The problem is that it is hard and time consuming to find effective and meaningful activities. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, November 8, 2009)

Belief in the importance of interactive activities is also shared by Kay and Joy. Kay said, "I believe students learn English best not 'by brain' but through participation in meaningful activities. I encourage them to participate in activities more actively" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, August 30, 2009), while Joy stated that "teachers should be able to understand students, reflect their

proficiency levels into teaching, and encourage them to participate in classroom activities. That requires lots of patience and consideration, though” (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009).

Even the teacher participants who did not believe that the ability to communicate in spoken English should be the goal of English language education in Korea pointed to the importance of motivation and interactive activities in the EFL classroom. For example, saying that she really wanted to motivate her students to learn English, Holly argued that “it is important to let students have some fun in order to make them like English or to encourage them to not give up” (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009). She added that one of the ways to do so is to employ interesting activities in the classroom.

#### *The importance of teachers’ pronunciation*

All 10 teacher participants were concerned with their English proficiency. They believed that their English proficiency should be high enough to teach students with confidence. Joy’s comment was typical:

As an English teacher, I must have high English proficiency so that I can teach students and answer their questions with confidence. Yes, that’s what I need. I need to increase my English proficiency. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 24, 2009)

It is worth noting here that Joy showed the highest English proficiency among the 10 teacher participants. Holly expressed a similar concern: “I need to increase my English proficiency so that I can teach with more confidence” (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 6, 2009).

In fact, what they were really concerned with seemed to be excellent, if not native-like, accent and pronunciation. Sally worried that “her low English proficiency might keep her from gaining students’ trust” (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 1, 2009). However, her real concern was about her accent and pronunciation:



I personally think a teacher's accent and pronunciation is not important. However, students may compare my accent and pronunciation with what they hear from the CD [attached to the textbook] and be disappointed and distrust me when they find my accent and pronunciation to be different from the ones on the CD. That's what worries me most. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009).

Relating this issue of pronunciation to the input-limited situation of Korea, Nancy argued that teachers' pronunciation must be excellent:

A teacher's pronunciation must be excellent. In Korea, students are often exposed to the English of native speakers these days. But many of the students are still exposed to English largely through their Korean English teachers. Teachers are models. So their pronunciation is important. They should aim for excellent pronunciation, if not native-like pronunciation. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 23, 2009).

Julie was the most blunt. She related the issue to the issue of losing face, which is a critical matter in the Korean society: "When a teacher's pronunciation is poor, students doubt the teacher's competence, and the teacher loses face" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 24, 2009).

#### *The importance of grammar and vocabulary*

Most of the teacher participants believed that grammar and vocabulary are a significant part of EFL teaching and learning in Korea. Believing that "grammatical knowledge is essential for the ability to speak 'natural' English" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009), Sally insisted that "grammar mustn't be deemphasized" (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 1, 2009). Similarly, Page believed that "without grammatical knowledge, the ability to converse in English won't be improved" (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 15, 2009). Betty presented the strongest case for grammar:

I really believe that grammar is at the heart of the ability to speak English. So, I'd say that, even in a speaking class, 70% of it should be grammar-related. . . . I think we have to provide grammar class separately. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 3, 2009)

Holly and Nancy, who believed the reading ability to be the goal of English language education, also believed that grammar is important. Nancy noted, for example:

Grammar is necessary. Grammar is a foundation. Teaching and learning grammar for the sake of grammar is problematic. Rather, we should show students where and how they can use grammatical knowledge. I personally think that it's most effective to teach grammar together with reading and writing. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 23, 2009)

However, the teacher participants clarified that their emphasis on grammar was different from the traditional GRA focus on grammar. They reported that the current emphasis on the ability to communicate in spoken English has been done at the expense of grammar and that grammatical knowledge is a foundation on which all English abilities and skills can be developed and refined. Kay argued:

The current "anti-grammar" move of the MOE-initiated reforms in English language education is a reaction to the excessive focus on grammar in the past. However, students must know grammar. Students learn more and more easily when they are introduced to key grammatical issues at the beginning of the class rather than simply being asked to participate in activities or role plays. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 20, 2009)

To Kay, the most idealistic method of grammar teaching was to let students themselves discover grammatical rules and patterns from examples provided by the teacher. In sum, the majority of the participants emphasized the importance of grammar as a tool, not for the sake of grammar.

Moreover, the majority of the teacher participants believed that a large vocabulary size contributes to high speaking proficiency. Sally stated:

If you know the meaning of a key word in a sentence, you can understand the meaning of the sentence. Knowing many words is useful for listening and speaking. For example, there is a great difference between a student who knows the meaning of the English word *apple* and a student who doesn't when they hear and comprehend a sentence like *I like an apple*. (2nd interview, September 25, 2009)

Betty argued that “a large vocabulary [together with substantial grammatical knowledge] enables learners to communicate in English without difficulty, or to express their thoughts and understand other people's thoughts easily. That's why I think vocabulary is important” (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 26, 2009). Henry even insisted that rote learning of English words contributes to the ability to communicate in English.

Above all, students need to learn many English words. They have to memorize them.

They then need to memorize idiomatic expressions. That way, they will be able to carry on basic English conversation without difficulty or fear. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009)

## 2) Sources of the beliefs

The second group of themes concerns the major sources of beliefs held by the participants. This group includes four recurrent themes: a) the strong impact of experience in overseas English programs, b) the significant influence of in-service teacher education programs, c) teaching experience as a wake-up call of the realities of English language education, and d) the secondary schooling experience as a negative model.

*The strongest impact of experience at overseas English programs*

Seven of the 10 participants attended intensive English programs and/or short-term TESOL programs in English-speaking countries, particularly in the U.S. (see Table 4.1). Most of the seven participants cited the overseas experience as having the strongest impact on their beliefs about English language education in Korea.

Page spent a year at an intensive English program in the U.S. From that experience, she learned that “being able to express her ideas and feelings in English is more important than being able to speak grammatically accurate English” (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, November 8, 2009). With the overseas experience, Page became more concerned with fluency than with accuracy, and that was reflected in her teaching practices (and beliefs). Betty, who spent three months at an intensive English program in the U.S., had a similar experience:

I went to the U.S. in my twenties. That experience brought a great change to my beliefs. I realized that grammar or pronunciation is not that important. What is important is not to be grammatically accurate but to be able to say what I want to and have to say. Through the experience, I realized what matters is speaking proficiency. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 3, 2009)

Edward, who spent six months in the U.S. as an exchange student and three months at an intensive English program in the Philippines, came to the following conclusion:

Overseas intensive English programs are most effective in increasing English proficiency. . . . Living in a situation in which you are unable to deliver your ideas or feelings to others and thus experience frustration is the best way to learn to speak English. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, October 1, 2009)

The experience as an English learner in the U.S. and the Philippines left such a strong impact upon Edward that he even argued for sending all Korean students to English-speaking countries.

*The significant influence of in-service teacher education programs*

The teacher participants' recollections of their experiences in their pre-service teacher education programs seemed to indicate the influence of the programs upon the teacher participants' beliefs and teaching practices. The courses they recalled included phonology, phonetics, syntax, grammar, English conversation, practical English, writing, reading, theories and practices in English teaching, material development, and practicum. Kay recalled a course in which she learned various approaches to ESL/EFL teaching, from the Grammar-Translation Approach to the Total Physical Response (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 20, 2009), while Sally remembered an elective titled Story Telling, in which she learned how to apply the story telling method to EFL teaching (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009). Moreover, most of the teacher participants remembered a course called Classroom English, in which they learned practical methods and skills for EFL teaching in the classroom. Edward, Nancy, and Sally recalled that the two courses (i.e., Story Telling and Classroom English) were very helpful when they started teaching.

Pre-service teacher education programs seemed to have had considerable impact upon the teacher participants' beliefs and teaching practices. Joy stated: "Although what I learned at the teacher education program was largely theory-oriented and, thus, impractical, its influence upon my beliefs has been considerable" (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009). However, only a few participants (i.e., Joy, Kay, Sally) reported such influence. Rather, other teacher participants expressed their disappointment that the programs were inadequate for preparing them for the MOE-initiated reforms, particularly for COA-based teaching. Theories they learned were usually

divorced from classroom teaching realities and thus of little practical use. Holly described her disappointment with the teacher education program she attended:

The professor asked us to divide the “teaching methods” textbook, which was in English, among us, translate the assigned part into Korean, and present it to the class. That was funny. What we learned in the course wasn’t practical. We just learned theories. The professor talked much about and repeatedly emphasized learner-centeredness, communication-oriented approaches, and whatnot. Anyone can say that. The professor should have shown us how to put the theories he was talking about into practice, how we could apply them in our actual classroom teaching. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009)

Even Joy who discussed the impact of her pre-service teacher education program, expressed her disappointment:

I thought the teacher education program would teach me practical methods I need to know to become a good English teacher. However, I was really disappointed. The program was full of teacher-centered, theory-oriented courses. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009)

In contrast to their disappointment with pre-service teacher education programs, the majority of the teacher participants cited in-service teacher education programs provided by the MOE or by local offices of education as a strong influence on their beliefs and practices. Betty recalled the impact of an in-service teacher education program she attended:

I attended an in-service teacher education program a couple of years ago. That program taught me both what I had already known and what I hadn’t known yet with regard to teaching methods. . . . That was only a month-long program, but it changed me a lot. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 3, 2009)

Joy's recollection was more specific. She described how helpful an in-service teacher education program she attended was to her preparation for TEE:

Last year I attended an in-service teacher education program designed to prepare us for TEE. That was very helpful. A native English-speaking instructor presented a model class. We also observed a class conducted in English by one of us. We learned a lot from this training. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 24, 2009)

Sally reported that she got “updated information about new teaching methods, skills, and activities” that she could easily apply to her classes by attending in-service teacher education programs (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009), whereas Kay remembered that the activities she learned at in-service teacher education programs always stimulated her to try them in her classes (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, August 30, 2009). Edward, who openly admitted that he was “teaching to the national college entrance exam,” also admitted that whenever he attended an in-service teacher education program, he became “uncomfortable with the way” he taught and often tried some of the methods and activities he learned at the program (1<sup>st</sup> interview, September 21, 2009). Henry attended more in-service teacher education programs than any of the other participants. He attended at least six programs of various length and nature, including the five-semester-long program he was attending at the time of the interviews. Henry was specific about the influence of in-service teacher education programs on his beliefs and teaching practices:

My teaching used to be based on the traditional grammar-translation approach. That was what I was most familiar and comfortable with. However, I changed a lot after I attended several programs for in-service teachers. The programs made me think deeply about the purposes and effects of certain activities I do. They also made me provide students with more opportunities to speak English. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 18, 2009)

Thus, in-service teacher education programs helped Henry in his personal transition beyond traditional GRA-based teaching toward more COA-oriented teaching.

*Teaching experience as a wake-up call for the challenging realities of English language education*

Many of the participants reported that, as their teaching experience increased, they became acutely aware of the power of educational realities that forced them to compromise. The realities include large classes, the washback effect of the national college entrance exam, and excessive administrative work, for example. Betty described her experience with high school students:

I tried to teach them some practical English that they could use when they went abroad, for example. But they looked at me as if I were crazy, talking nonsense and wasting their precious time. I hated that look, that facial expression. So, I stopped trying. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, September 1, 2009).

Julie reported her failed attempt to teach English in English:

When I started teaching at the middle school, I decided to teach English in English no matter what. . . . But I had to give up. Explaining things or giving instructions in English took too much time and, thus, made it hard to cover what was required by the curriculum. In addition, students didn't pay attention because they didn't understand what I said in English. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009).

Joy described most powerfully the change her teaching experience had brought to her:

It's really sad. I really wanted to base my teaching on COA. Much of what I learned at the college of teacher education was about COA-related theories and methods. How to motivate students to speak English, that kind of thing. . . . I really wanted to do COA-



based teaching. I wanted to have communication-oriented classes, using English as a language of instruction. However, after teaching for two years, I realized that I had to teach not speaking but grammar and reading. I have changed because students have to get high scores on GRA-based tests. What I really want to do with students in the classroom is largely irrelevant to the tests. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009)

Thus, for Joy, her two-year teaching experience had become a wake-up call for the realities of English language education in Korea.

Many of the teacher participants reported that they had opportunities to observe other teachers' teaching and such experience had a significant impact upon their own teaching practices and beliefs. Kay reported: "I learn from professors or books. However, I learn a lot more by observing teaching demonstrations done by other teachers in programs for in-service teachers like me" (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 20, 2009). Henry agreed with Kay, saying:

"Observations of other teachers' teaching give opportunities to gain practical information and to reflect upon my own teaching practices and beliefs" (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009). Nancy repeatedly emphasized the usefulness of observing other teachers' classroom teaching:

I always want to observe the teaching of other teachers. I believe classroom observation is important. We can learn a lot by observing other teacher's regular classes, not well-prepared demonstrations. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 23, 2009)

Nancy even suggested establishing a system which allows teachers to observe other teachers' teaching on a regular basis.

#### *The secondary schooling experience as a negative model*

All 10 participants reported that their English learning at secondary schools was centered on grammar, reading, and translation. According to Henry, his secondary school experience was

“all grammar and translation” (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009). Kay was more specific about her experience at her secondary schools:

Yes, it was totally grammar-focused. In the middle school, there was some pattern drills. We had opportunities to repeat after the teacher. But, even pattern drills weren't there in the high school. Reading a sentence and translating it into Korean and listening to teachers' explanations about grammatical features was all we did in the class. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, September 20, 2009)

Page reported a similar experience: “In the high school, all English classes were geared to the preparation for the national college entrance exam. No activity. No speaking. No listening. Just grammar, reading, and translation. . . . That wasn't fun” (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, November 8, 2009).

Largely because of the GRA-based secondary schooling experiences, former teachers remembered by the teacher participants were either those whose teaching was an extreme case of GRA or those who, even if temporarily, tried to do something different. Henry recalled a teacher whose instruction was the extreme case of the traditional GRA:

One of my middle school English teachers liked to impress us by memorizing a part of the textbook and writing it down on the blackboard. He then read sentence after sentence, translating each sentence into Korean. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009).

A teacher remembered by Nancy showed a similar tendency:

When I was a freshman in middle school, the English teacher was a little old woman. She asked us to memorize the whole English textbook. She called our names at random, told us a page number, and asked us to recite the passages on that page. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 26, 2009)

In contrast, Kay recollected the joy she felt when her high school teacher took time to teach them the lyrics of an American popular song, which had nothing to do with the national college entrance exam (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 20, 2009), while Page remembered a middle school teacher who used many exciting role plays in the class (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009).

The GRA-based experiences that the 10 teacher participants reported as having as EFL learners in secondary schools seemed to have impacted them in conflicting ways. The experiences served as a negative model for those who believed the teaching goal to be the ability to communicate in spoken English. Joy recalled that because she was on the receiving end of English teachers' boring lectures on grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills, she decided not to teach English that way if she becomes an English teacher (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009). However, the same experience served as a positive model for those who did not share the belief in the primacy of the ability to communicate in English. Holly, who was one of the two participants who argued for learner ability to read and comprehend English effectively, stated:

My grammar-centered teaching was partly based on my own experience as a student. I wasn't good at English in my middle school years. During a vacation, however, I picked up a grammar book and read through it and reread it. That helped a lot. That is why I emphasize grammar in my classes. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009)

### 3) Perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms

The third group of themes relates to the participants' perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms and accompanying measures. The majority of the teacher participants perceive the general direction of the MOE-initiated reforms positively. However, their perceptions of specific reform policies or measures were mixed. Some of the policies were perceived positively, but others were perceived negatively for various reasons. Taken together, seven recurrent themes

were identified: a) the positive perception of the general move of the reforms, b) the significance of starting English language education earlier, c) the importance of exposure to native English speakers, d) the lack of consideration of readiness of both students and teachers, e) the threat to the vested interest of in-service teachers, f) the lack of adequate/practical supports, and g) the poor preparation of reform-related measures.

*The positive perception of the general move toward COA*

The general direction of the MOE's reform efforts has been toward the implementation of COA. This general direction was accepted positively by the seven participants who believed in the primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English. The following statement made by Henry is representative:

I tend to agree with the various reform policies and measures developed and issued by the MOE because that's the direction I believe our English language education should take.

The move toward COA is right. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 18, 2009)

However, their positive perceptions always came with reservations. Kay pointed out the bias toward speaking proficiency: "I agree with the framework of the reforms. However, I think speaking is emphasized too much in the reforms" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, August 30, 2009). Sally was concerned with the speed of the reforms: "I think the move of the reforms toward learner ability to communicate in spoken English is right. That should be the goal. . . . However, the speed of the reform worries me" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009). Similarly, Joy criticized the hastiness:

I like the big picture the MOE has been trying to draw with the reforms. I like the general direction. But I think they're too hasty. They don't consider realities carefully. They need to slow down so we can catch up with them. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, October 9, 2009)

Moreover, the reforms' general move toward COA posed a serious threat to some of the teacher participants. Betty related that "older teachers in particular felt threatened" by the reforms' emphasis on speaking proficiency (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 3, 2009). This sense of being threatened was briefly but strongly represented in the following statement made by Henry: "The reforms require high speaking proficiency, and you have to quit if you don't or can't have that proficiency. I may have to quit soon" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 18, 2009).

In contrast, three participants, Edward, Holly, and Nancy (who did not believe in the primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English) perceived the general direction of the reforms negatively. They stated that an emphasis on the ability to read English effectively would be more useful than the current focus on the ability to communicate in English. Holly argued:

Where special emphasis should be placed is a matter of importance. . . . Which one would be better for Korea, having people who can speak English or those who can read English and find necessary information? I think the ability to read English should be emphasized more. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009)

Naturally, the three participants were mostly negative toward specific reform policies and measures.

*The significance of starting English language education earlier*

The participants' perceptions of specific policies or measures were mixed. Nine of the 10 participants perceived the EEL policy positively; however, they differed on the starting age for English language education. Six teacher participants (i.e., Betty, Henry, Holly, Joy, Nancy, and Sally) accepted the current starting age to be most reasonable. Interestingly, these participants based their judgment on the combination of the Critical Period Hypothesis and the concern for

the interference between the incomplete acquisition of Korean and the learning of English language. Holly argued:

I think the current third grade is a reasonable starting age for English language education. That age is within the period referred to as the Critical Period Hypothesis. In addition, if students start learning English earlier than the third grade, they will be overwhelmed by the burden of learning English on top of their incomplete mastery of Korean. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 6, 2009)

Betty was more specific about the basis of her argument:

According to the Critical Period Hypothesis, the younger learner is better at language learning than the older learner. I believe so. However, first or second grade appears to be too early. At that stage . . . children's acquisition of Korean isn't completed, and such incomplete acquisition of the first language will interfere with the acquisition of English. As a result, starting English language education earlier than the third grade may cause children to lose interest in learning English. . . . I think that the first or second grade is too early, and the third or fourth grade is most appropriate. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 3, 2009)

None of the six teacher participants explained on what basis they claimed that Korean children fully acquire their mother tongue by the age of nine and that incomplete L1 acquisition interferes with L2 acquisition.

Three teacher participants, Edward, Kay, and Page, argued that English language education could start earlier than the current starting age (i.e., the third grade or the age of nine). Edward argued: "I think the first or second grade is better. I really think the earlier, the better" (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, October 29, 2009). However, he did not explain why he thought the starting age

should be earlier than the current one. That explanation came from Page, who was teaching at a local elementary school:

I think first or second grade is much better. Upper graders tend to learn through reasoning. They ask why, and I have to explain why a sentence must be written that way, this is a noun, this is a verb, and so on. . . . Lower graders seem to just learn. They seem to absorb like a sponge whatever they hear or see in class. I just need to provide them with appropriate materials and meaningful contexts. . . . They have a greater absorbing power than upper graders. I often think that starting English language education at the first grade is better. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 15, 2009)

Only one participant, Julie, perceived the EEL policy negatively. Julie, who was teaching at a middle school, preferred the first year of middle school. The reason underlying her argument was similar partly to the reason held by the six participants who favored the current starting age (that is, the third grade).

I prefer the first year of middle school. I myself started learning English at that age, and, because of that, I could continue learning English without being overwhelmed by it. I don't think it's a good idea to start English learning and teaching in elementary school.

At that stage, children haven't mastered even their own first language. Thus having them learn English at that stage isn't a good idea. . . . Many students will lose interest in English and give up before they reach middle school. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 24, 2009)

Thus, Julie was concerned that elementary students' incomplete acquisition of Korean would interfere with effective English learning and teaching and that, as a result, many will lose interest in learning English. However, Julie did not make it clear on what basis she argued that children

do not master Korean by their age of seven or eight and that incomplete L1 acquisition interferes with L2 acquisition.

*The importance of exposure to native English speakers*

The teacher participants' perceptions of team teaching (with a native English-speaking instructor) policy were largely positive. Seven of the 10 participants stated that both students and teachers would benefit by interacting with native English-speaking EFL teachers at the school, considering that on-campus exposure to English is often all of the exposure they have. Betty and Kay agreed that just having a native English-speaking instructor was enough to draw students' interest and motivated them to speak English in the classroom. Sally summed it up:

The native English-speaking instructor [in my school] arouses interest among students and motivates them to talk in English. Moreover, she functions as a source of foreign culture. Students are exposed to foreign culture through the instructor. As for me, the instructor gives valuable feedback on my English, lesson planning, and teaching practices. Therefore, personally I like the team teaching system. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 12, 2009)

However, the same teacher participants pointed to some limits of having native English-speaking instructors via the team teaching. Joy and Julie questioned the impact of a native English-speaking instructor in “the situation where the team teaching takes place once a week” (Joy, 3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 24, 2009; Julie, 1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 27, 2009). From a slightly different point of view, Edward questioned the impact and effectiveness of having a native English speaker:

Even if we have a native English speaker through the team teaching system, what's the use in a 50-minute class with over 40 students? What opportunities does each student have in that situation? If we consider the cost and impact of having a native English-



speaking instructor in a 50-minute class with 40 students once a week, isn't it better to use an audio cassette player? (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, October 29, 2009).

Moreover, Henry pointed out the irregular operation of team teaching. The MOE [and the local offices of education] encourages that the Korean teacher take the leading role with the native English-speaking instructor playing an assistant role. However, in reality, the native instructor frequently leads the class with the Korean teacher assisting the instructor. Henry described this irregular operation in the following way:

The Korean teacher and the native instructor are supposed to prepare a lesson plan together and then the Korean teacher is supposed to lead the class. However, I ask the native instructor to prepare the lesson plan, and, in class, I play the role of an assistant, helping the native instructor manage the classroom and translating some instructions into Korean when students don't understand them. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009)

Furthermore, Holly was concerned with a recruitment of native English speakers who are unqualified (or under-qualified) for teaching.

Even for us who have majored in English education and learned about teaching methods, teaching is still difficult. But, many native English speakers have only one advantage, that is, English being their first language. They don't know how to teach and don't try to learn how to teach. That has been a problem. The local office of education tells us not to let a native English-speaking instructor lead the class but to use him/her as an assistant. To me, a native English-speaking assistant is just like an audio cassette player. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 6, 2009)

Other limits of having native English-speaking instructors through team teaching were also pointed out. Among them were the imposition of additional work on the Korean counterpart (e.g.,

finding places to live for native English speakers; Sally, 2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September, 25, 2009) and the frequent maladjustment of native English-speaking instructors to the realities of Korean schools (e.g., inability to manage a large class; Kay, 2<sup>nd</sup> interview, August 30, 2009).

*The lack of consideration of readiness of both students and teachers*

The participants judged that some of the reform policies and measures were developed and issued without considering the readiness of students and teachers. Consequently, they argued, implementing those policies and measures was problematic. A good example for this is their perceptions of TEE.

All 10 teacher participants viewed that TEE is inappropriate if it means an exclusive use of English as the medium of instruction. It must be noted here that, in the classes observed for this study, none of the participants used English exclusively as the medium of instruction. Three participants (Betty, Holly, and Nancy) used Korean exclusively, and the rest of the participants used both languages.

The teacher participants were quick to point out that their students' low English proficiency was a major reason for their negative perception of TEE. They argued that, although they were aware of the benefits of TEE for increasing students' English proficiency in the input-limited context of Korea, their students' small vocabulary and limited command of English structures kept them from using English as the medium of instruction. Kay reported that, whenever she tried to use English as the medium of instruction, her students asked her to use Korean (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 17, 2009), whereas Sally stated that, even though she considered TEE to be a right policy, she used Korean because "TEE would backfire; TEE would overstress students" (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 1, 2009). Edward said that TEE makes an English

class a “one-way class with no response from students” (1<sup>st</sup> interview, September 21, 2009).

Nancy put the matter in the following way:

After several futile attempts, I realized that teaching English exclusively in English is not effective. Above all, I judge students’ English proficiency to be too low. . . . To have a meaningful class, they should be able to respond in English, but they can’t due to their low English proficiency. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 26, 2009)

Nancy’s justification for using both languages was her concern for students’ better understanding. She raised a question and answered it herself:

Which one is better, having students understand only 10% of what I want them to know by teaching it in English or having them understand 100% by using both Korean and English appropriately? I think the latter is better for students. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 1, 2009)

An alternative frequently suggested by the participants was a differential use of English according to students’ English proficiency levels. Joy provided the most sophisticated explanation:

Students’ English proficiency levels should be considered in teaching English in English. For students with high level of English proficiency, English should be used predominantly. For those with middle level of English proficiency, both English and Korean should be used appropriately. For those with low level of English proficiency, Korean should be used predominantly. That is, how much English should be used in English classes depends on students’ English proficiency levels. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 24, 2009)

In contrast to the quick reference to the non-readiness of students, only a few teacher participants related their own low English speaking proficiency or lack of confidence in their own English speaking proficiency to their negative perceptions of the TEE policy. Betty, who used Korean exclusively in classes observed for the study (see Table 5.13), admitted that she was not comfortable with the TEE policy because she was afraid that she might not be able to “explain some complex grammatical features fully and effectively in English” (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 3, 2009). Interestingly, in a roundabout way, Holly admitted her own deficiency (or lack of confidence) in English speaking proficiency to be a reason for her negative view of TEE initiatives.

I see TEE positively. However, it must come with support, intensive training for us. We did not have any opportunity to learn to teach English in English. Changing policies and then just forcing us to teach English in English is asking too much of us, isn't it? (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 6, 2009)

Holly's point seemed to be that the TEE policy did not consider the situation that her English proficiency was not high enough to conduct English classes in English. The statement also reveals that the TEE policy must cause considerable stress for Korean EFL teachers who lack English proficiency high enough to teach English in English.

*The threat to the vested interest of in-service teachers*

The teacher participants viewed some of the reform policies and measures as a threat to their vested interest. This was revealed in their perceptions of the English conversation lecturer system. The English conversation lecturer system was launched to compensate for the serious shortage of qualified EFL teachers with high English proficiency. Applicants for English conversation lecturer positions must have at least a bachelor's degree in English education, or

closely related majors, as well as high English proficiency. The system places so much emphasis on high English proficiency (particularly oral English) that it gives priority to applicants with high TOEFL or TOEIC scores, experience of overseas intensive English programs, and TESOL certificates (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Surprisingly, all 10 teacher participants opposed the system. Most of them based their opposition on a concern for a possible recruitment of unqualified (or under-qualified) teachers with no sense of professionalism as teachers. Joy pointed out that the lecturer who was hired through the system and assigned to her school failed to meet her expectations:

It's a difficult matter. The MOE encourages us to take COA and provides us with various supports. The English conversation lecturer system is one of them. I don't know how much change it will bring to English language education. We have an English conversation lecturer now. The lecturer is in charge of about 20 lower English proficiency students. That means I have fewer students in my class. In this sense, the system is good. But the lecturer doesn't appear to conduct conversation-centered classes. I don't think the system changes English language education much. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, October 9, 2009)

Julie viewed the system as a result of political decision to give jobs to unemployed college graduates:

I don't like the English conversation lecturer system. That is yearly contract-based. The government just created it to provide more jobs. Prospective English conversation lecturers are not licensed. They lack professionalism. . . . If they want to be treated like regular licensed teachers, that would be a serious problem. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 24, 2009)

Nancy was offended by the system and gave a long explanation of the reason for her strong opposition. Nancy earned a certificate from a one-year TESOL program in the U.S. (see Table 4.1):

From a licensed teacher's point of view, the system's plan to recruit people simply because they have completed short-term TESOL programs is outrageous. I know how TESOL programs are because I myself have a TESOL certificate. I got it after attending a TESOL program in America for a year. . . . I know how superficial TESOL programs are. . . . Many Koreans come to the U.S. and get a TESOL certificate as if they get a driver's license. . . . Thus, hiring people with TESOL certificates on a temporary basis and sending them to classrooms will be a serious disservice to English language education in the long run. That will intensify people's distrust of public education. . . . To speak frankly, the system undermines the sense of pride we have as licensed teachers. A system which lets people teach English just because they speak English well hurts our sense of pride. That is not right, and I strongly oppose it. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 23, 2009)

Underlying the oppositions of the teacher participants was a sense of threat to their vested interest. Kay expressed this sense of threat in a mild tone. Like Julie, Kay viewed the system as a kind of political decision to solve the unemployment problem that has been plaguing young Korean college graduates for years. Kay's real concern was that temporary lecturers employed through the system might become regular teachers some day:

The system appears to be a measure to rescue those who are unemployed but have some ability to speak English. If that's the purpose, they better increase the quota for primary and secondary English education majors. Isn't it ironic that they decrease the quota and,

at the same time, try to recruit temporary English lecturers? ... English conversation lecturers start teaching as temporary lecturers on a yearly contract. Beginning is always like that. However, when it's compounded with an unemployment problem, who knows what will happen. We don't know when they become regular teachers like us. . . . As you know, that actually happened in other areas such as nurse teachers. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 17, 2009)

Betty described the sense of threat most clearly in this blunt comment:

The system is a potential cause for conflict. . . . I'm not talking about protecting our vested interest, but I don't think the system is right. Something has to change, but the system comes to me as a threat. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 1, 2009)

*The poor preparation of reform-related measures*

The teacher participants perceived some of the reform-related measures as not carefully prepared or developed. An example was the abrupt inter-grade transition of the current curricula for English. Some of the teacher participants pointed out that, at the primary level, for example, English classes for lower grades are communicative-activities-centered, with much emphasis on having fun, whereas those for upper grades become more academic, with students being introduced to reading and writing. Because of such an abrupt transition, many students in the upper grades, particularly those who cannot keep up with the more rigorous work, lose interest in English. Kay took this matter as a serious drawback to effective teaching and learning:

English classes for third and fourth graders are centered on fun activities designed for speaking and listening. English classes for fifth and sixth graders suddenly become difficult, exposing students to reading and writing even without teaching them how to

pronounce words. As a result, quite a few students lose interest in English. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, August 30, 2009)

The abrupt transition was also reported to take place between the curriculum for the primary school and that for the middle school. Page observed:

Up to sixth grade, English textbooks are full of various interactive activities. However, such activities are rare in middle school textbooks. They're more academic, I would say, and many students are simply overwhelmed and give up. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, November 8, 2009)

Others reported that the amount of learning required by the current curricula for English was the problem. Sally referred to the excessiveness of the amount of learning that students had to deal with: "With the current textbooks, we have too much to teach and students have too much to learn. It's just impossible to cover all" (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 1, 2009).

Holly addressed the issue in detail. She first pointed out the abrupt transition between the curriculum for the primary school, which was largely based on spoken English (i.e., speaking and listening), and that for the middle school, which made a sudden introduction of written English (i.e., reading and writing). She then focused on the sudden and dramatic increase in the amount of grammar knowledge and the size of vocabulary as students move from middle schools to high schools:

The format and content of the textbooks are problematic. . . . When students enter high school, they are overwhelmed by the size of vocabulary and the amount of grammatical knowledge they have to learn. Many students simply fall out. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 6, 2009)



According to Holly, one of the reasons some teachers avoided COA-based classes was that there was too much to be covered in textbooks: “We don’t even have enough time to cover the given contents of the textbook, not to mention time-consuming communicative activities or games” (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 22, 2009).

*The lack of adequate/practical support*

The MOE has been offering various in-service teacher education programs to facilitate the implementation of the reforms. Seven of the 10 teacher participants indicated a limited number of opportunities to be reeducated with regard to reform policies and measures. Betty stated:

The number of reeducation programs for in-service teachers is too limited. More programs should be offered. At the same time, we want to have intensive training on teaching methods and spoken English, not on theories. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 1, 2009)

As Betty’s statement implies, teacher participants felt that their English proficiency, particularly speaking proficiency was not high enough to conduct classes based on COA. They wanted to attend programs specifically designed to show how they could effectively employ COA-based teaching methods or to increase their individual English proficiency. As a result, teacher participants were disappointed that many of the in-service teacher education programs provided by the MOE or local offices of education were theory-oriented, and thus impractical. Kay wanted to have more programs “designed to improve teachers’ English ability to speak English” (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 17, 2009). Similarly, as we saw in the discussion of the impact of in-service teacher education programs, Joy acknowledged the considerable impact of an in-service teacher education program she attended and then emphasized the necessity to provide more programs designed to increase teachers’ English proficiency:

Last year I attended an in-service teacher education program designed to prepare us for TEE. That was very helpful. A native English-speaking instructor presented a model class. We also observed a class conducted in English by one of us. We learned a lot from this training. I want to see more programs of that kind, more practical programs that provide us with methods we can apply in class or increase our ability to speak English. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 24, 2009)

#### 4) Constraints on the implementation of reform policies and measures

The fourth group of themes relates to the constraints caused by the realities of English language education in Korea. The MOE recommends COA to English language teaching with its focus on students' ability to communicate in spoken English, and COA in turn recommends learner-centered, contextualized, communicative activities, for example. A majority of the teacher participants believed that current realities of English language education make it difficult, if not impossible, to employ COA. As a result, many of the teacher participants were frustrated and even lost faith in the reforms. Three constraints were frequently cited by the participants as impeding the implementation of the MOE-initiated reforms in general and COA to English language teaching in particular: a) the washback effect of the national college entrance exam (English section), b) excessive teaching loads and administrative work, and c) large classes.

##### *The washback effect of the national college entrance exam*

The national college entrance exam was singled out by all 10 teacher participants as a critical constraint on the implementation of COA-based teaching of English. The English section of the national college entrance exam consists of 31 reading comprehension items, two grammar-related items, 13 listening comprehension items, and four speaking-related items.<sup>17</sup> Thus,

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<sup>17</sup> The reading comprehension items require considerable grammatical knowledge.

vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills play a decisive role in the English section of the national college entrance exam. This leads students to care about vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills, but not as much about speaking ability and skills encouraged by the MOE in its reform efforts. Edward discussed this inconsistency between the COA-based direction of the reforms and the continuing administration of the GRA-based national college entrance exam:

The current format of the English section of the national college entrance exam is contradictory to what the MOE emphasizes in its reform efforts. If they want to focus on learner ability to communicate in spoken English, that should be reflected in the national exam. You can't have it both ways. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, October 29, 2009)

The national college entrance exam exerts a particularly strong influence on the way English is taught in high schools, where English language education virtually centers on preparing students for the national exam. Teachers, under pressure to ensure that students do well on the national exam, spend considerable time teaching test-taking skills and drilling students on test items of a similar nature and format to those of the national college entrance exam. Betty, who was teaching at a high school, pointed out this serious washback effect of the exam:

The national college entrance exam has a great influence on classroom teaching practices. I have no choice but to teach to the exam. I want to help my students learn about some cultural matters or do some activities they may find interesting. But, if I don't teach to the exam, if I don't teach them test-taking skills and drill them on test items from a test preparation book, students would look at me as if I am wasting their precious time by talking nonsense. . . . They would look down on me. So, I have changed. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 1, 2009)

This situation left little room for COA for both teachers and students. Even though an increasing number of teachers and students realized the importance of the ability to communicate in English, they were not motivated to embrace COA demanded by the MOE-initiated reforms and accompanying curricular changes. Nancy, who was teaching at a high school, vividly described this lack of motivation for teachers and students to participate in COA-based classes:

Because of the format of the English section of the national college entrance exam, students won't be motivated to learn English conversation skills even if I try hard to let them. They take an English conversation class as an opportunity to take a 45-minute break. . . . Students have to do well on the national college entrance exam in order to be admitted to a prestigious university. The national exam has total control over classroom teaching and learning. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 1, 2009)

The national college entrance exam also exerts a strong influence on English classes at middle schools. Joy, who was teaching at a middle school, made the following statement:

We, as teachers, have to meet what the students want. They don't want the ability to communicate in spoken English. They want to do well on exams. . . . They're well aware that they have to do well on the national college entrance exam in order to enter a prestigious college. Thus, they want to study English in such a way that they will get high scores on the exam, and naturally, they like teachers who share this goal. So, it's not easy to motivate students to develop the ability to communicate in spoken English. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009).

This washback effect of the national college entrance exam is felt less acutely at the elementary level. Thus, Sally, who was teaching at an elementary school, did not see the necessity to change the format of the national exam.

I haven't taught in high school, so I don't think much about the national college entrance exam. I don't think it's necessary to change the exam. Even if we want to change it in order to put more communication-oriented test items into it, it would be extremely difficult to come up with an alternative that can satisfy all. A new exam format which can assess the ability to communicate in English more effectively requires an enormous development cost. Moreover, it will eventually drive students to English language education options in the private/commercial sector. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009)

However, the rest of the teacher participants wanted to renovate the national exam. Nancy believed that the most effective and fastest way to reform our English language education in Korea is to change the format of the national college entrance exam. She asserted: "An innovation of the current assessment system would bring a significant change to the way English is taught in high schools" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 23, 2009). Julie even suggested an immediate elimination of the English section of the national college entrance exam: "As people say, eliminate the English section from the national exam, then students will go for English conversation" (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 24, 2009). Holly and Nancy argued that the current scoring system should be replaced by a pass/fail system. Betty and others urged the earlier development and introduction of the National Test of English Proficiency the MOE announced will be introduced by the year 2012 in its "2006 English Language Education Reform Plan" (Ministry of Education, 2006).

#### *The overload of teaching and administrative work*

All 10 teacher participants reported that they were overwhelmed by their teaching load. Korean EFL teachers usually teach 17-20 hours per week: 17-18 hours in elementary school, 20 hours in middle school, and 18 hours in the high school. However, teachers are almost always

asked to teach more in the form of special, make-up, or after-school classes. Nancy elaborated on the excessive teaching load she had to put up with. In her comment, a class hour refers to 50 minutes for a class, and regular classes mean classes a teacher is required to teach under contract:

I teach 18 regular class hours per week. In addition to that, I have to teach one after-school class a day, and that makes five additional classes per week. . . . There are also what are called 'special classes' for students with relatively high English proficiency. I teach three special classes per week. Thus, I teach at least 26 class hours per week. . . . I simply don't have time to prepare quality classes, and students receive classes of low quality. I am just tired. When I teach special classes, which are from nine to 10 at night, I have to come to school by 7:30 in the morning and go home at 10 at night. That makes me exhausted at the end of the day. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 24, 2009)

In addition to this heavy teaching load, teachers have to take care of various administrative responsibilities such as reporting students' achievements to local offices of education and handling paper work for transfer students. Because the teacher participants were already overloaded, any additional work is a very real burden for them. As a result, all of them expressed discontent that they were overloaded with administrative work that was only indirectly related to classroom teaching. The following statement made by Holly was typical:

The government has been talking about reducing the workload. But teachers are still overloaded with teaching, counseling, and administrative work. We don't have time to sit down and read books or think about activities for classes. . . . In this situation, we don't have time to find or prepare materials that are necessary for conducting the classes in the way recommended by the MOE. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 22, 2009)

They complained that the administrative workload has significantly increased since the pronouncement of the 7<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum largely due to the MOE's desire to have hard evidence for their reform efforts. This administrative work includes various formal reports of statistical results, attendance at administrative meetings, and summaries of intra-school achievements, among others. Kay described the situation:

They support us a lot financially or otherwise. At the same time, they want to have results and ask us to report results to them. For example, they send us a native English-speaking instructor. They then ask us to make an official report on how we actually used the instructor, what progress the instructor made, and so on. . . . Support is good, but they have to know that what we really want is less administrative work, less work which is not directly related to teaching. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 17, 2009)

All 10 teacher participants indicated that they could do better at teaching if they had more time to prepare lessons: "I believe we could do much better in preparing quality classes or classes the MOE wants to have if our teaching and other work load is significantly decreased" (Holly, 2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 22, 2009).

### *Large classes*

All 10 participants also cited large classes as one of the principal constraints on their attempts to employ COA. The average class size taught by the 10 teacher participants and observed for this study was 34.2 students (see Table 4.1 for details). A majority of the participants believed that learner-centered communicative activities are important. However, as Joy reported, the teacher participants found that large classes often make such activities unfeasible or impractical:

It is difficult to have COA-based classes in the current situation in which a class contains 40 students. If a teacher asks me to participate in a communicative activity with so many students, even I wouldn't do that. In addition, it's almost impossible to control the class. The class becomes too noisy when I have students do communicative activities (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 15, 2009)

Nancy related the issue to the effectiveness of having a native English-speaking instructor in an English conversation class:

A native speaker comes to teach English conversation once a week. The 50-minute class has over 35 students. Most of the students do not have a chance to talk with the instructor during the 50 minutes. What's the use? (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 1, 2009)

All 10 participants agreed that, in order to have effective COA-based classes in Korea, the class size should be decreased. Sally suggested 25 as the maximum number of students for the purpose of effective communicative activities:

I can't do any activities when a class has more than 30 students. I just can't. For communicative activities, the fewer, the better. I can manage with 25 students, but not more than that. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 1, 2009)

Most of the participants agreed that 20 is the maximum number of students for effective communication-oriented classes in Korea: "Twenty is the maximum number for the group activities I want to do. That class size will also give students more opportunities to use English" (Kay, 3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 17, 2009).

#### 5.2.2. Patterns identified in the observation data

A summary of the classroom observations is presented here in order to show the extent to which the teacher participants' reported beliefs matched their observed teaching practices as well



as the extent to which they attempted to implement the MOE-initiated reforms. Table 5.13 presents the summary.

Table 5.13. *A summary of classroom observations*

Name (age)	Observation (student number & grade level)	Characteristics
Kay (31)	1 <sup>st</sup> : 30 4 <sup>th</sup> graders 2 <sup>nd</sup> : 31 4 <sup>th</sup> graders	- COA-based teaching - Well-organized team teaching with a native speaker - Use of pair works, games, & songs - Use of English in most part, but often first use of English for directions and then repetition of the directions in Korean
Page (26)	1 <sup>st</sup> : 28 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> graders 2 <sup>nd</sup> : same as 1 <sup>st</sup>	- COA-based teaching - Learner-centered, fun-based teaching - Use of pair works, games, songs, & pattern drills - Use of more Korean than English
Sally (28)	1 <sup>st</sup> : 34 5 <sup>th</sup> graders 2 <sup>nd</sup> : same as above	- COA-based teaching - Use of group works, games, role plays, & pattern drills - The Korean teacher's leading role in the team teaching - Use of more Korean than English
Joy (25)	- 1 <sup>st</sup> : 41 7 <sup>th</sup> graders - 2 <sup>nd</sup> : same as 1 <sup>st</sup>	- Largely COA-based teaching - Use of English in most part, but often use of Korean for directions
Julie (34)	1 <sup>st</sup> : 38 7 <sup>th</sup> graders 2 <sup>nd</sup> : same as 1 <sup>st</sup>	- Mixture of COA-based and GRA-based teaching - Focus on grammatical items - Use of a group work under the teacher's complete control of the classroom - Use of more Korean than English
Henry (46)	- 1 <sup>st</sup> : 20 7 <sup>th</sup> graders - 2 <sup>nd</sup> : same as 1 <sup>st</sup>	- Mixture of COA-based and GRA-based teaching - Frequent emphasis on vocabulary - The teacher's assistant role in a team teaching (e.g., translating difficult expressions into Korean) - Frequent use of Korean for directions & explanations
Holly (41)	- 1 <sup>st</sup> : 46 9 <sup>th</sup> graders - 2 <sup>nd</sup> : same as 1 <sup>st</sup>	- Traditional GRA-based teaching - Teacher-centered, grammar-focused teaching of listening comprehension skills - Exclusive use of Korean
Edward (29)	- 1 <sup>st</sup> : 33 11 <sup>th</sup> graders - 2 <sup>nd</sup> : 34 11 <sup>th</sup> graders	- Mixture of COA-based and GRA-based teaching - Textbook-based, teacher-centered teaching of the listening comprehension skills - Frequent use of Korean for directions & explanations
Betty (41)	- 1 <sup>st</sup> : 42 12 <sup>th</sup> graders - 2 <sup>nd</sup> : not conducted*	- Traditional GRA-based teaching - Preparation for the national college entrance exam - Exclusive use of Korean as the medium of the instruction
Nancy (32)	1 <sup>st</sup> : 33 12 <sup>th</sup> graders 2 <sup>nd</sup> : not conducted*	- Traditional GRA-based teaching - Preparation for the national college entrance exam - Exclusive use of Korean

\* 12<sup>th</sup> graders do not have regular classes during the months of October and November in order to focus on the national college entrance exam in November. Nor do they have regular classes after the national exam.

A comparison of the summary with the discussion of the participants' beliefs about the EFL teaching goal reveals that the majority of the teacher participants reflected this belief in their teaching practices. Seven of the 10 teacher participants reported that they considered the ability to communicate in spoken English to be the goal of EFL teaching in Korea. Six of these seven participants conducted at least partially COA-based classes. Betty was the exception. Her reported COA-based beliefs did not match her GRA-based teaching practices. This mismatch between beliefs and practices may have been caused by the washback effect of the national college entrance exam. Betty was teaching 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Thus, she had to teach to an external test (that is, the national college entrance exam), which places considerable emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and reading. This case clearly suggests that the national college entrance exam is a major constraint on the implementation of the MOE-initiated reforms.

Two teacher participants (i.e., Holly and Nancy) believed that the ability to read effectively should be the teaching goal. They reflected the belief in their teaching practices, which were based on traditional GRA. Edward was an exception. The two classes Edward allowed me to observe were at least partially based on COA although his reported beliefs were largely based on GRA. Interestingly, this mismatch was the result of his perception of what he thought I needed. That is, he was kind enough to conduct COA-based classes for my study. In fact, a few other teacher participants (e.g., Henry and Julie) admitted that they were conscious of my presence in their classes, and that consciousness drove them to use more English in class than they ordinarily would.

The summary also reveals that there is a significant relationship between the teacher participants' perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms and their teaching practices. This is best revealed with regard to the TEE policy. The 10 teacher participants' perceptions of the TEE

policy were negative. They stated that both students and teachers were not ready for classes conducted exclusively in English. In the classes observed for this study, none of the teacher participants used English exclusively as the medium of instruction. Three participants (Betty, Holly, and Nancy) used Korean exclusively, and the rest of the participants used both languages.

Finally, the summary reveals an interesting pattern. As the teacher participants moved down teaching levels (that is, from high school through middle to elementary), their teaching also changed from traditional GRA-based teaching to more COA-based teaching. The teaching of Betty and Nancy, who were teaching 12<sup>th</sup> graders, was based on GRA, using Korean as the medium of instruction. In contrast, the teaching of Kay, Page, and Sally, who were teaching elementary school students, was based on COA, using a variety of learner-centered communicative and pair work activities as well as trying to use as much English as possible. This pattern was also confirmed by Joy who was teaching at a middle school. She reported that her teaching was more GRA-based when she taught 9<sup>th</sup> graders than when she taught 7<sup>th</sup> graders because “9<sup>th</sup> graders were closer to the national college entrance exam” (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 24, 2009). In short, the summary reveals that the teacher participants followed a recognizable trajectory from GRA toward COA (as recommended by the MOE in its reform efforts) that is tied to the level of education which they teach.

### 5.3. Summary

The themes and other related issues identified in the interview and observation data can be summarized into the following six major findings.

First, the beliefs held by a majority of the 10 teacher participants were largely COA-based with a trace of GRA. Their beliefs were COA-based in that they believed in the primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English, the importance of communicative and group

activities, and the necessity of oral tests. The teacher participants also believed in the importance of grammar. However, they made it clear that “teaching and learning grammar for the sake of grammar is problematic” (Nancy, 2nd interview, September 23, 2009), and this indicates that their emphasis on grammar is quite different from traditional GRA to English language teaching. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the teacher participants’ beliefs were not primarily GRA-based but indicated a trace of GRA. In this sense, this finding is consistent with the finding from the survey data, which indicated that the 158 participants’ beliefs were largely based on COA. However, this finding does not support the findings of previous investigations. For example, J. Choi (2008), S. Choi (2000), and E. Kim (2008b) reported (pre-service) Korean EFL teachers’ pedagogical beliefs to be grammar-focused, teacher-centered, and textbook-centered.

Second, the teacher participants suggested experiences in overseas English programs and (domestic) in-service teacher education programs as main sources for their COA-based beliefs. Seven of the 10 teacher participants had experiences in overseas English programs, and most of them cited the overseas experiences as the strongest impacts on their beliefs. Moreover, a majority of the 10 participants cited domestic in-service teacher education programs to have been a significant influence on their beliefs and teaching practices. They agreed that in-service teacher education programs that offered practical curricula or that were designed to enhance their spoken English proficiency helped them move toward more COA-oriented teaching. In contrast, a majority of the teacher participants expressed dissatisfaction with the largely theory-oriented pre-service teacher education programs they attended.

Experience as a language learner at the secondary school has been suggested as an important source of teachers’ beliefs (M. Borg, 2001; S. Borg, 1998, 1999; K. Johnson, 1994; Peacock, 2001; Richardson, 1996). All 10 participants’ secondary school experiences were

GRA-based. This finding is consistent with the finding from the survey data. The finding is also consistent with the findings of previous studies (e.g. Ahn, 2009; E. Kim, 2008b). However, the finding fails to explain the largely COA-based beliefs held by a majority of the teacher participants. At the same time, the GRA-based secondary school experiences seem to have been a positive source for the three participants' (i.e., Edward, Nancy, and Holly) non-COA-based beliefs. The same experiences also seem to have been a source for the trace of GRA in the other participants' largely COA-based beliefs. Teaching experience has been suggested as another important source of teachers' beliefs (Attardo & Brown, 2005; Poynor, 2005; Richardson, 1996). For the seven participants who believed in the primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English, actual teaching experience was a wake-up call for the realities of English language education in Korea. They felt that some of the realities forced them to compromise. In this sense, teaching experience was a major influence on their teaching practices, if not a main source for their beliefs. In addition, many participants reported the observation of other teachers' teaching as a significant source of influence upon their own beliefs and practices.

In short, experiences in overseas English programs and (domestic) in-service teacher education programs seem to have constituted the two main sources for the participants' beliefs, or such experiences brought substantial change to their beliefs. This finding implies what EFL teacher education in Korea should do. In the least, Korean EFL teacher education must attend to teacher participants' disappointment with theory-oriented pre-service teacher education programs and preference for in-service teacher education programs specifically designed to show how they could effectively employ COA-based teaching methods or to increase their individual English proficiency.

Third, the majority of the 10 teacher participants positively perceived the general direction of the MOE's reform efforts toward COA. This positive perception is consistent with their COA-based beliefs or, to be more specific, with their belief in the primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English. However, their perceptions of specific reform policies and measures were often dictated more by concerns over educational realities and even by self-interest than by their beliefs. For example, nine of the 10 participants perceived the EEL policy positively, which does no harm to their vested interest, whereas all of them negatively perceived the English conversation lecturer system, which is a potential threat to their vested interest. Incidentally, the 10 participants' positive perceptions of the EEL policy seem to provide an explanation for an inconsistency identified in the survey data, that is, the inconsistency between the belief in the child age superiority in learning English and the opposition to the MOE's EEL policy. The inconsistency must have been caused by the final word of the statement of item C33 in the questionnaire, "*English language education should begin in the primary school or earlier.*" The majority of the 158 participants/respondents must have intended to say that English language education should not start earlier than the third grade.

Fourth, one of the reform-related measures negatively perceived by the majority of the participants was the nature and availability of in-service teacher education programs offered by the MOE or local offices of education. This finding is consistent with the finding from the survey data. Most of the teacher participants were frustrated with limited availability of in-service teacher education programs and the theory-oriented nature of the available in-service programs. Considering the second finding, which indicates the significant influence of in-service programs on the participants' beliefs and practices, this (fourth) finding points to the role of teacher

education as well as the necessity to offer more in-service teacher education programs with more practical curricula.

Fifth, most of the participants demonstrated teaching methods that were congruent with their beliefs. For example, the teaching of the three participants who did not believe in the primacy of the ability to communicate in spoken English (i.e., Holly and Nancy) was GRA-based, whereas the teaching of the participants who believe in the primacy of the speaking ability was based on COA or at least on the mixture of COA and GRA. Under this superficial congruence, however, a considerable gap is revealed. The most obvious example was Betty. She believed in the primacy of speaking proficiency, but, due to the washback effect of the national college entrance exam, her teaching was exclusively based on traditional GRA, preparing her 12<sup>th</sup> graders for the national college entrance exam. Moreover, some of the 10 participants said that their “regular” classes (meaning classes they did not want to be observed) were more GRA-based.

Sixth, all participants cited the washback effect of the English section in the national college entrance exam, the overload of teaching and administrative work, and large classes as three major constraints on the implementation of COA-based teaching as recommended by the MOE in its reform efforts. The deficiency in the teacher participants’ speaking proficiency (or the lack of confidence in their speaking proficiency) also appears to function as a constraint on the implementation of COA-based teaching methods. This finding is consistent not only with the finding from the survey data but also with some of the constraints identified by S. Choi (2000) and Li (1998) as impeding the implementation of CLT in Korea. The constraints identified by the studies include large classes, teachers’ low English proficiency, lack of authentic resources, and washback effects of the testing systems which prioritize grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills.

The constraints might have been a main cause for the mismatch between the participants' reported beliefs that were congruent with COA, their classroom teaching practices that were not based on COA, and their negative perceptions of some reforms policies that are congruent with COA. In particular, most of the participants were seriously concerned over the washback effect of the national college entrance exam. Pressure of the test has been documented and commonly cited as a detriment to the implementation of COA (Gorschu, 2000; Hiramatsu, 2005). According to Shohamy (2005), "test takers learn to 'play the testing game' as they comply with the demands of the tests and change their behaviors and learn what is covered on tests" (p. 103), and teachers are forced to "teach to the test" (107). This "teaching to the test" explains the gap between some participants' beliefs and their teaching practices as identified in the classroom observations. It explains particularly well the gap between Betty's belief in the primacy of speaking proficiency and her GRA-based teaching. Betty simply put her belief on hold and complied with the demands of the GRA-based English section of the national college entrance exam in order to maximize her students' scores on the exam and to appease her student audience.

This and other constraints cited (and implied) by the 10 participants exerted a critical influence upon their beliefs, practices, and perceptions. This fact indicates the urgency of providing a reform-friendly environment and, more importantly, the necessity of "reality-informed" and/or "bottom-up" reform efforts.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This study attempted to answer four research questions. The four questions are repeated here as a reminder to the reader: a) what beliefs do Korean EFL teachers have about English language education in Korea?; b) what are the sources of their beliefs?; c) what relationship(s) do Korean EFL teachers' beliefs have with their perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms in English language education?; and d) what relationship(s) do Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms have with the implementation of the reforms in their classroom teaching?

The results of the survey, interviews, and classroom observations provide answers to these four initial research questions. First, the beliefs held by a majority of the teacher participants were based on COA, which has been recommended by the MOE in its reform efforts. Second, the major sources of beliefs seem to be learner experiences in overseas English programs and domestic in-service teacher education programs with practical curricula. Third, the teacher participants' COA-based beliefs led to the positive perception of the general move of the reforms. However, their perceptions of specific reform policies and measures were dictated by their concerns with realities of English language education and concerns for their status. Finally, the main obstacles to the implementation of the reforms (COA in particular) in their classroom teaching were not the participants' beliefs but their negative perceptions of some specific reform policies and measures and the constraints they cited.

The results and findings of this study reveal complex relationships that are formed between the teacher participants' beliefs, perceptions, and practices and the realities of English language education. These realities (e.g., teachers' deficiency in speaking proficiency or lack of confidence in their speaking proficiency, the washback effect of the national college entrance

exam, an overload of teaching and administrative work, and large class size) function as constraints on the implementation of MOE initiatives. The complex relationships in turn reveal gaps and mismatches among the participants' beliefs, perceptions, and practices. For example, there is a gap between some participants' COA-based beliefs and their practices of teaching to the largely-GRA-based national college entrance exam. Such gaps and mismatches are largely the result of the considerable impact of realities functioning as constraints upon the participants' beliefs, practices, and perceptions. Put differently, the gaps and mismatches can be viewed not as inconsistencies but rather as a reflection of the complexity of the issues and the strategic adjustment of the teacher participants in the face of the rupture between the demands of MOE-initiated reforms and the realities of on-site English language education. These gaps and mismatches are close to what Johnson (2009) calls "inner contradictions" (p. 79). Drawing upon activity theory as an analytical framework, Johnson argues that L2 teaching is not neutral but embedded in "the broader social, historical, political, and ideological practices that constitute L2 teachers' professional world" (p. 93). These practices shape "macro-structures" such as educational reform policies and high-stakes tests (p. 78). Inner contradictions often result from the "clash" between macro-structures and L2 teachers' teaching activities. Johnson emphasizes that these contradictions should be uncovered and resolved by L2 teacher education, among others.<sup>18</sup> However, the gaps and mismatches can also be interpreted as symptomatic of a transitional stage through which English language education in Korea has been passing. The teacher participants as a group hold beliefs that are COA-based with a trace of GRA. This can be seen as a transition of the group from the traditional GRA-based teaching toward COA-based teaching. If this has been the case, the symptoms are encouraging in that the MOE's reform

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<sup>18</sup> As an example of inner contradictions, Johnson (2009) gives the following explanation: "[A] high-stakes grammar and reading comprehension test can derail even the best-intentioned L2 teacher's efforts to enable her students to develop greater overall communicative proficiency" (p. 79).

efforts prompted such transition, and the gaps and mismatches evidence the extent of the impact the reform efforts have been making upon the teacher participants.

English language education in Korea has long been dominated by GRA-based beliefs and teaching practices. One of the drawbacks of this tradition is low spoken English proficiency despite years of learning. Globalization has made the ability to speak in English even more of a necessity than ever before. It no longer seems to be an option for Korean learners. In this sense, the MOE's reform efforts have been inevitable. The substance of what the teacher participants said reveal both positive and negative aspects of the MOE-initiated reforms. Among the positive aspects, this study found several constructive impacts of the MOE's initiatives. All 10 teacher participants agreed that English language education has been changing. One of the teacher participants, Henry, observed that "Koreans' ability to speak English has been increased a lot, owing to the reforms" (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, November 15, 2009). Another participant, Edward, described it this way:

English language education has been changed. It cannot be denied that English language education has changed. Test items I had in the middle school were different from those middle school students are presented with now, for example. But, in order to have a more substantial change, realistic and appropriate policies must be developed. They [reform agents] mustn't hasten to accomplish too much. (3<sup>rd</sup> interview, October 29, 2009)

As the statement implies, the MOE-initiated reforms have been successful at least partially, and the gaps and mismatches identified in the teacher participants' belief, perceptions, and practices are the evidence of that (partial) success.

At the same time, the study uncovered the necessity of a more serious conversation between Korean EFL teachers and the MOE or reform agents. As Edward's statement implies,

what is needed at this moment are reform policies and measures that are developed more carefully on the basis of a clearer understanding of Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education, their perceptions of reform policies and measures, and their struggles with realities of English language education, which frequently function as constraints on the implementation of the MOE-initiated reforms. More importantly, this study found that the MOE needs to listen more carefully to the voices of Korean EFL teachers who are already well into the process of living out such realities of English language education in Korea.

### 6.1. Implications of the results and findings

The results and findings of this study have a range of implications. First of all, they have implications for three constituents of English language education in Korea: Korean EFL teachers, reform agents, and EFL teacher education programs. Although the study was conducted with a particular group of Korean EFL teachers, its results and findings may also have international implications. In particular, they seem to offer significant implications for other EFL countries which share some of the characteristics of English language education in Korea.

#### 6.1.1. Implications for Korean EFL teachers

Korean EFL teachers need to reflect upon their beliefs about English language education, their teaching practices, and their perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms, and see whether there are any gaps, mismatches, or self-justifications. More importantly, they need to carefully examine whether they cling to their beliefs simply because they are uncomfortable with the demands of the reforms. They also need to consider whether their negative perceptions of certain reform policies and measures are due to their desire to preserve the status quo which they may believe are threatened by the policies and measures.

Korean EFL teachers may also need a stronger will to change. The following statement from Nancy may resonate with some teachers:

To be honest, I have been lacking the will to practice oral-communication-oriented teaching methods I learned at the college of education and the TESOL program. . . . The traditional teaching method is easy. It just needs a textbook, a simple lesson plan, and a complete control of the classroom by making students keep quiet and listen to what I have to say. If I had an English conversation class or a class with interactive activities, I have to spend much more energy and time. Thus, I avoid interactive activities and justify it by saying that I don't have capability, experience, or time to do so, or I don't have a role model I can follow. Moreover, most teachers don't do interactive activities, so I have decided not to. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 23, 2009)

If this kind of self-justification and other mismatches are identified in their reflection, Korean EFL teachers should be willing to take measures to resolve them. They may be able to do so by attending more in-service programs designed to promote individual English proficiency, effective teaching methods based on COA, or communicative activities. In any case, Korean EFL teachers may not have the luxury of allowing themselves to stand still while the environment of English language teaching around them is changing rapidly.

#### 6.1.2. Implications for reform agents

Reform agents must realize that just developing and issuing reform policies is not enough to ensure that the policies will be accepted by EFL teachers and reflected in their classroom teaching. They must recognize that teachers are at the center of English language education reform and that, thus, any reform attempt without attending to Korean EFL teachers can lead to dismal failure. It is Korean EFL teachers who are living the realities of educational sites and

know well what constrains the successful implementation of reforms. Therefore, reform agents must find ways to monitor EFL teachers' perceptions of reform policies, find out what constrains them from implementing such policies and measures, and take steps to resolve the identified constraints. One way to do this is to establish standing committees on "EFL teachers' voices" at local offices of education. The committee would consist of EFL specialists, MOE officials, and a focus group of teachers. Its major function would be to meet teachers and collect their voices widely and systematically on a regular basis.

The results of the present study indicate that in-service teacher education programs, particularly those designed to improve teachers' English proficiency and teaching methods exert considerable influence on the teacher participants' beliefs and teaching practices. This implies that a pressing priority would then be for reform agents to provide more in-service programs designed to assist Korean EFL teachers in increasing their English proficiency and in learning practical methods of COA-based English teaching.

Most importantly, the results of this study indicate that a majority of the teacher participants (and by extension Korean EFL teachers) are frustrated to find that no one seems to attend seriously to their struggles as they try to deal with the realities of English language education. Sally, one of the 10 teacher participants, noted.

We are at the front and, thus, know about the realities better than any one else. We may not see the whole, but we see the parts better. We know the issues and problems.

However, no one listens to our voices. (2<sup>nd</sup> interview, September 25, 2009)

This sense of "their voices are not being heard" may be partially, if not fully, responsible for negative perceptions of some particular reform policies and, what may be worse, indifference to any reform policy. Under such circumstances, teachers' willing and active participation in the

reform efforts can hardly be expected. Therefore, reform agents must listen carefully to teachers' voices and find effective ways to include teachers' voices in the policy-making process.

### 6.1.3. Implications for EFL teacher education programs and specialists

Tedick (2005) suggests that “[c]ontextual factors are fundamental to second language teacher education” (p. 97). In Korea, the MOE-initiated reforms represent a set of contextual factors that EFL teacher education programs in Korea have to address. Korean EFL teacher education programs must engage in a sustained search for ways to contribute to the reform efforts, unless they strongly oppose the reforms. In other words, EFL teacher education programs and the specialists who work within them should explore ways for mediating between teachers and reform agents while listening carefully to the concerns of all those involved. One way for teacher educators to contribute to the reform efforts is to develop innovative curricula and offer more finely tuned courses designed to prepare (pre-service and in-service) teachers for the demands of the reforms. For example, Korean EFL teacher education programs need to provide courses that aim to increase teachers' English proficiency and give them hand-on experiences of practical teaching methods and skills based on COA.

Another way is to provide teachers with opportunities to reflect on their beliefs, practices, and perceptions. Since Schön (1987) made the term *reflection* an important theme in teacher education by carefully reinterpreting the concept of reflection and the criteria of systematic reflective thinking, general consensus has been that reflection can enhance professional practice and development, offering practical ways to deal with classroom teaching issues and professional development issues. This consensus has also been established in the field of English as a second language (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 1998; Stanley, 1998). Therefore, one of the goals of EFL teacher education programs in Korea should be preparing teachers to develop skills as reflective

practitioners. Zeichner and Liston (1996) argue for the addition to the domains of reflection of “the implications of one’s beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and values as well as opportunities and constraints provided by the social conditions in which the teacher works” (p. 20). That is, reflection involves not only reflection on theoretical and methodological aspects of one’s teaching but also upon its social and moral aspects. Therefore, EFL teacher education programs in Korea, particularly those for in-service teachers, should help teachers learn how to reflect not only on the theoretical and methodological aspects of their teaching practices but also on the consequences of their beliefs, perceptions, and practices. In other words, EFL teacher education programs should provide opportunities for teachers to become reflective practitioners, who can reflect on the beliefs they hold, teaching practices they conduct, and perceptions they have toward reforms and innovations, check whether there is any gaps between them, and, if any, find solutions for the gaps.

Still another, and perhaps the most important, way for EFL teacher education programs and specialists to contribute to the MOE’s reform efforts is to engage in the development of theories, methodologies, and practices that are more suitable for English language education in the Korean EFL context. Nancy, one of the 10 teacher participants, stated:

I attended a TESOL program for a year in the U.S. and received a certificate. . . . I didn’t know the difference between ESL and EFL before, but now I know the difference clearly. Methods developed for ESL are not effective in the Korean context. . . . I really want someone to conduct research which can lead us to a better understanding of Korean learners of English, that is, research on what Korean learners want, how they learn English, how they feel about English, how they are different from learners of other



countries, and so on. I also want someone to do research on teaching methods based on such a better understanding. (1<sup>st</sup> interview, August 26, 2009)

As this statement implies, the MOE-initiated reforms are largely based on theories and methods developed in what Kachru (1994) calls the inner circle. Those theories and methods may not be appropriate for the Korean context, which has its own unique needs and circumstances. The teaching environment in Korea has its own unique features such as lack of appropriate authentic materials, limited opportunities to speak English, large classes, and low English proficiency of average Korean EFL teachers, among others.

There has been ongoing discussion of the development of context-specific EFL theories and methods that more reasonably reflect local needs and realities (Bax, 2003; Guilloteaux, 2004; Han, 2004; Hu, 2005; S. A. Kim, 2000; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008; Shiga, 2008). Baumgardner and Brown (2003) and Petzold (2002) insist that an ideal pedagogical model in the EFL context must show a consistent link between theory, practice, and context. However, they argue, there is little theory development with respect to English language education in EFL countries. Inner circle theories and practices in language pedagogy are routinely applied to the settings of the expanding circle, and that can be problematic. As a solution to this problem, they suggest that we select a pedagogy that is sensitive to local needs and contexts. Bax (2003) refers to this as a context-sensitive approach to language teaching, which highlights the necessity of “placing context at the heart of the profession” (p. 278). Kumaravadivelu (2006) makes a similar point in his call for a postmethod pedagogy, which emphasizes the particularity of teaching: “Particularity seeks to facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy that is based on a true understanding of local linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities” (p. 69). The assumption underlying this context-specific/postmethod pedagogy is

that “teachers teach best in situations that are compatible with their background, beliefs, and expectations” (Barkhuizen, 2008, p. 233).

A simplistic adoption of theories developed in non-EFL contexts and methods based on such theories may not be appropriate for English language education in Korea. It would be better to develop English language teaching theory and methodology which take into consideration the realities of English language education in Korea. What is important is that such a discussion of the development of context-specific teaching theories and methods be based upon in-depth understanding of Korean EFL teachers’ beliefs, practices, perceptions, and struggles to deal with the realities of English language education.

#### 6.1.4. Implications for EFL countries and ESL teacher education programs

The results and findings of the study have implications for other EFL countries, particularly for China and Japan. As discussed in the literature review chapter, a number of studies carried out investigations of EFL education in China and Japan (and other EFL countries). The studies show that English language education in these countries is similar to the Korean experience in several respects. First of all, English is considered to be a very important subject in educational contexts of these countries (Butler, 2004, 2005; Kim & Jeon, 2005). Second, these EFL countries have attempted to reform English language education. Since the late 1980s, Japan has been attempting to reform its English language education by introducing more COA-oriented curricula (Hiramatsu, 2005; Kubota, 1998; Sato, 2002; Savignon, 2003; Wada, 2002). China also began to reform its English language education in the early 1990s, and the reform effort has resulted in more communication-oriented curricula (Anderson, 1993; Zhu, 2003). Third, reforms in these countries have generally been difficult due to several constraints such as teachers’ traditional GRA-based beliefs and teaching practices, teachers’ low spoken English proficiency,

large-size classes, the lack of authentic materials required by COA-oriented reforms, and e) a washback effect of the dominant GRA-based testing systems. In short, many EFL countries (or at least Asian countries such as China and Japan) share many of the characteristics of EFL education in Korea and thus may benefit from the results and findings of this investigation.

The results of the present study may also have implications for people working within ESL teacher education programs. ESL programs usually have many students not only from Korea but also from other EFL countries. Thus, ESL programs need to expand their curriculum concerning EFL contexts. They need to consider how they can help students from EFL contexts function effectively when they return to their countries and become involved in local practices of English language education. One thing that those involved in ESL teacher education programs can do is to become more informed about the characteristics of EFL contexts and consider any possible conflicts between those characteristics and the theories and methods they teach. Native English-speaking teacher learners in ESL teacher education programs who plan to teach English in EFL settings will also benefit from the expansion of this knowledge about EFL contexts, as they may be able to function more effectively if they are pre-informed of the realities of teaching EFL in the EFL situations they plan on working in. For this purpose, the results and findings of this study can be an important source of information.

## 6.2. Limitations and suggestions for future research directions

At the risk of appearing immodest, I can say with confidence that the research methodology of this study is more complete than that of previous studies. It employs three data collection techniques and procedures (i.e., survey, interview, and observation), while most of the previous studies about Korean EFL teachers relied on just two or only one of these techniques. By combining quantitative and qualitative research instruments, the study has generated a new

and better understanding of the relationship between in-service Korean EFL teacher' beliefs about English language education, their perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms, and their attempts to implement the reforms in their classroom teaching. Moreover, the study is probably the largest of its kind in scale. Among the currently available studies, Park et al. (1997) surveyed 283 Korean kindergarten EFL teachers and interviewed seven of them once. Even though E. Kim (2008) and Kang (2008) used interview and observation research techniques and generated rich data, both of them had only one Korean EFL teacher participant. In contrast, the present study surveyed 158 teacher participants from various elementary, middle, and high schools. It also interviewed 10 of the 158 teacher participants three times and observed their classroom teaching twice. In this sense, the study is the largest in scale to date. These features have contributed to the production of a richer and clearer picture of (Korean EFL) teachers' beliefs, practices, and perceptions and their relationships to (the MOE's) reform efforts. Such methodological features of the study can serve as a stimulus to enrich data collection techniques in the study of (Korean) EFL teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and practices and their relationships with (MOE's) reform efforts. Furthermore, as one of the first attempts to investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their perceptions and implementations of English language education reforms in a less studied context, that is, the Korean context, this study expands studies on (ESL/EFL) teachers' beliefs.

At the same time, any research enterprise is inevitably limited by constraints such as time, participant recruitment, and resources. This study is no exception. Two limitations must be mentioned for this study. One limitation is related to the difficulty of recruiting participants in interviews and classroom observations. Because it was extremely difficult to recruit Korean EFL teachers for interviews and particularly for observations, I had to recruit some of them through

my personal network and by visiting primary schools. Incidentally, the 10 teacher participants as a group had more overseas experiences than average Korean EFL teachers. Seven of the 10 teachers had overseas experiences. Although the exact percentage of Korean EFL teachers who have such experiences with overseas English programs remains unknown, the ratio of seven out of 10 certainly seems high. This and other characteristics of the 10 teacher participants could have skewed the results. For example, interviews of a group of Korean EFL teachers who had relatively less overseas experiences than the 10 teacher participants might have produced somewhat different results.

Another possible limitation of the study concerns the lack of coding training and member checks. In order to decrease researcher bias and enhance reliability of the study, an independent researcher was invited to participate in the coding of the interview data. As I described in the data analysis section, this outside coder affirmed that she was familiar with the procedures of thematic analysis. Therefore, at her request, we agreed not to have a training session. Instead, in an informal manner, we shared information on the study's research questions, its working definition of teachers' beliefs, data collection and analysis tools and procedures, recruitment of the participants, my experiences with interviews and transcription of the interviews, and the start list of codes I prepared. However, if we had conducted a training session together, the inter-coder reliability (and, thus, the reliability of the whole coding process and resulting themes) might have been further enhanced.

Member checks are frequently employed as a way to enhance reliability. Member checks refer to the process in which participants are asked to check emerging conclusions (Willis, 2007, 220). This process is absent in the current study. The 10 teacher participants in the study had an opportunity to check the accuracy of the transcription of their interviews. However, they were

not provided with opportunities to check and express their thoughts about the emerging themes and conclusions. Rather than implementing a procedure of member checking, I simply explained to the participants that I respected their voices based on their professional judgments and that I would make my dissertation available to them once it was completed. If I had employed the member-checks process, I might have been ever more attentive to their voices, and the reliability of the themes and other findings of the study might have been further enhanced.

The study also points to areas that deserve further research attention. The following presents some suggestions for future research. First of all, this study does not reflect several factors that can make a difference in the results and findings. Horwitz (1999) suggests that beliefs may vary based on “age, stage of learning, and professional status” (p. 557), and Allen (2002) empirically demonstrates that teachers’ beliefs are significantly different, depending on factors such as membership in professional organizations, gender, highest educational degree earned, and private vs. public school (p. 524). The impact of these factors seems relevant in this study, as well. For example, in the analysis of the classroom observation data, it was noticed that the participants teaching at elementary schools tended to be more COA-oriented in their teaching than their counterparts teaching at high schools. In order to derive a more refined picture of in-service Korean EFL teachers’ beliefs and perceptions, future research needs to take into consideration such factors as age, teaching level (i.e., primary vs. secondary), and academic and cultural experience in English-speaking countries, among others.

Future research might also pay attention to EFL instructors teaching in the commercial/private sector. In the study, all the participants were in-service teachers teaching at publicly-supported “formal” schools. However, Koreans have been heavily dependent upon commercial (or private) English language education (Lee & Cha, 1996). This indicates a strong

possibility that the beliefs and perceptions of EFL instructors working in the private sector play a significant role. Therefore, more studies need to be conducted on the beliefs and perceptions of EFL instructors working in the commercial/private sector.

Furthermore, students' beliefs need to be investigated. Like teachers' beliefs, students' beliefs likely influence how they process information, that is, their English learning. If their beliefs place much emphasis on memorization of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary words, for example, they will not be motivated to improve their spoken communication skills even if their teachers tend to emphasize such skills. Moreover, if EFL teaching would be learner-centered, what students believe, expect, and want should be highlighted and brought to the foreground. Thus, it would be informative to investigate Korean students' beliefs about EFL learning.

Finally, future research might take the form of a longitudinal study on the possible differences between the beliefs Korean EFL teachers hold when they enter teacher education programs, the beliefs they have when they complete such programs, and the beliefs they have several years after they start teaching as in-service teachers. Most of the teacher participants in the interviews of the study reported that the beliefs (and attitudes) they held as pre-service teachers had changed significantly in the face of realities of the educational sites. Thus, it would be very informative to investigate whether or not pre-service teachers' beliefs change during and after their teacher education programs and, if they do, what exactly contributes to the change.

Further research on these areas and issues would serve as significant complements to the present investigation. Such research would provide a more complete picture of Korean EFL teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and practices, and a more complete picture of this nature might better equip teacher educators, policy makers, and other EFL specialists to provide educational

policies, teacher education, and teaching methods that are more effective, meaningful, and sensitive to local contexts and sensibilities.



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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

A questionnaire for the survey

(Adapted from S. Choi, 2000; Horwitz, 1985; E. Kim, 1997; H. Lee, 2006;

Li, 1998; Savignon & Wang, 2003)

Section A: Please respond to the following questions either by putting X or writing a numeral in an appropriate slot.

1. Gender: male \_\_\_\_\_ female \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been teaching English? \_\_\_\_\_ years
4. Which educational level are you teaching English?  
     primary school \_\_\_\_\_ middle school \_\_\_\_\_ high school \_\_\_\_\_
5. Address of the school in which you teach (please write briefly like the following example).

(Example) Chung-gu, Daejeon City

- 
6. Rank (from 1 to 7) the following skills and areas according to your view of their usefulness in learning English.

reading	_____
writing	_____
speaking	_____
listening	_____
grammar	_____
vocabulary	_____
pronunciation	_____

Section B: Please read each sentence and then decide if you: 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) agree, and 4) strongly agree. For example, if you strongly disagree with what the following sentence means, you circle the numeral 1 as the example shows. There is no right or wrong answer. We are simply interested in your thoughts or opinions.

(Example) strongly disagree strongly agree  
 All ESL teachers must be American. ① 2 3 4

7. When I was a secondary school student, learning English was mostly grammar-focused.

strongly disagree strongly agree  
 1 2 3 4

8. My secondary school English teachers put much emphasis on grammatical knowledge.

1 2 3 4

9. My secondary school English teachers mostly spoke Korean in class.

1 2 3 4

10. When I was a secondary school student, learning English was mostly communication-focused.

1 2 3 4

11. My secondary school English teachers often designed activities to have us interact in English with peers.

1 2 3 4

Section C: Please answer the following questions from your perspective as an EFL teacher.

There is no right or wrong answer. We are simply interested in your thoughts or opinions.

1. Learning English is important for Koreans. strongly disagree strongly agree  
 1 2 3 4

2. Speaking skills are more useful than reading skills in learning English.

1 2 3 4

3. Listening comprehension skills are more useful than translation skills in learning English.

1 2 3 4

4. Spoken communication skills (e.g., speaking, listening) are more important than written communication skills (e.g., reading, writing). 1 2 3 4
5. The goal of English teaching should be preparing students to read passages in English and translate them into their native language effectively. 1 2 3 4
6. In the EFL classroom, accuracy should be emphasized. 1 2 3 4
7. The goal of English teaching should be preparing students to communicate with foreigners in English. 1 2 3 4
8. In the EFL classroom, fluency should be emphasized. 1 2 3 4
9. Fluency needs to be more emphasized than accuracy in the EFL classroom. 1 2 3 4
10. Practicing grammar patterns is an important part of English learning. 1 2 3 4
11. Memorizing new vocabulary words is an important part of English learning. 1 2 3 4
12. In learning English, it is important for learners to repeat and practice a lot. 1 2 3 4
13. The more English grammar rules a student learns, the better she is at speaking English. 1 2 3 4
14. The more words a student memorizes, the better she is at speaking English. 1 2 3 4
15. Teachers need to follow the textbook. 1 2 3 4
16. It is important to practice English in real-life-like situations. 1 2 3 4
17. Practicing English in communicative activities is essential to eventual mastery of English. 1 2 3 4
18. Students can improve their English by speaking English with their classmates in the classroom. 1 2 3 4
19. Pair and small group activities are important for students to improve their English. 1 2 3 4
20. English language education must focus on what teachers think students have to learn.

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. Teachers need to have a firm control over the entire classroom.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. English language education must meet students' needs.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. Teachers need to pay attention to students' interests.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. The current system of English proficiency assessment has a great influence on teaching English in the classroom.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. The current format of the English portion of the national college entrance exam (or College Scholastic Aptitude Test) needs to change. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 26. No effective means of assessing students' oral communication skills is available now.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. A smaller size class is better for EFL teaching than a larger size one.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 28. It is important to expose students to native English speakers.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 29. Teachers need to be fluent in spoken English in order to teach effectively.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30. It is easier for children than adults to learn English.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31. It is important to speak English with a native-like accent.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32. In English class, students and teacher must use English only.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 33. English language education should begin in the primary school or earlier.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 34. I am familiar with the government-initiated reforms.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Section D: Please respond to the following questions by writing as much as you want.
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1. Write three to four reasons why you think English language education is important in Korea.
2. What methods are you using in teaching English now?
3. Are you aware of some of the Ministry of Education-initiated reforms in English language education? If so, please describe some reforms of which you are aware.
4. Have you ever had opportunities to attend seminars or other forms of programs intended to provide detailed information on MOE-initiated reforms or to receive trainings related to the reforms? If you have, when and where did you have such seminars or trainings?

5. If your answer to question 4 above is positive, has the seminars or trainings you had influenced your classroom teaching in any way?
6. List three to four things you think you need urgently in order for you to improve or change your classroom teaching of English.

## Appendix B

### Informed consent form for survey

Georgia State University  
Department of Applied Linguistics and ESL  
Informed Consent Form

**Title:** Korean teachers' beliefs about English language education and their impacts upon Ministry of Education-initiated reforms

**Investigators:** John Murphy (PI) and Cheong Min Yook (student PI)

**I. Purpose of the Research:** This study investigates the relationship between Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education in the Korean context, their perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms, and the degree to which they may be implementing the reforms in their classroom teaching. You are invited to participate in the study because you are Korean EFL teachers. A total of 150 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require 20 minutes of your time.

**II. Procedure:** This study will be conducted in a classroom at International Graduate School of English, Seoul, Korea. You are expected to participate in the study only once. You will be asked to respond to a questionnaire, which consists of five questions about your background, five questions about your previous experience as an EFL learner, 34 likert-scale questions about your beliefs about English teaching and learning, and five open-ended questions about your beliefs and awareness of the Korean government-initiated reforms in English education. The whole procedure will take about 20 minutes. You will be paid 5,000 won for your 20-minute participation.

**III. Risks:** The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

**IV. Benefits:** Taking part in this research may not benefit you personally. However, the results of the research will show the role of English teachers' beliefs in reforming English education in Korea. This will help us find out more about how to improve English education in Korea.

**V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:** Participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**VI. Confidentiality:** We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Dr. John Murphy and Cheong Min Yook will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board). We will use a specially assigned number rather than your name on study records and it will be destroyed after the research is conducted. Your record will be stored in Cheong Min's protected computer. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear

when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in such a way that you will not be identified personally.

**VII. Contact Persons:** Contact either John Murphy at 1-404-413-5193, [jmmurphy@gsu.edu](mailto:jmmurphy@gsu.edu) or Cheong Min Yook at 010-4730-1463, [eslcmyx@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:eslcmyx@langate.gsu.edu) if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 1-404-413-3513 or [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu).

**VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:** We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

**If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Appendix C

### Guiding questions for interviews

(Adapted from S, Borg, 1998)

#### *Previous experience as an EFL learner*

1. What do you remember about your previous experiences of learning English?
  - a) What approaches or methods were used?
  - b) Do you recall whether you enjoyed learning English or not?
2. Do you feel that your own experience as an EFL learner has had any influence on the way you teach English today?

#### *Experience at a teacher education program*

1. How and why did you become an EFL teacher?
2. Tell me about your formal teacher training experiences.
  - a) Did they promote a particular way of teaching?
  - b) Which aspect(s) of course(s) did you find most memorable?
3. What recollections do you have about your earliest teaching experiences?
  - a) Were they particularly positive or negative?
  - b) What kinds of teaching methods and materials did you use?

#### *Reflections on teaching experience*

1. What do you feel is the most satisfying aspect of teaching EFL?
2. What is the hardest part of the job?
3. What do you feel are your strengths as an EFL teacher?
4. What do you feel are your weaknesses as an EFL teacher?
5. What do you think is most important in teaching and learning English in Korea?

a) What is your idea of a successful lesson?

b) Do you have any preferences in terms of classroom activities?

4. Do you have any preferences in terms of the types of students you like to teach?

*Others*

1. What have the greatest influences on your development as a teacher been? Experiences as an EFL learner? Teaching experiences? Teacher training/development courses?

2. Does the school you work for promote any particular approach to EFL teaching?

3. Are you aware of the MOE's efforts to reform EFL education?

a) Can you describe some of the reform efforts?

b) How do you feel about them?

c) What do you like or agree with? What do you not agree with?

d) How much do you think your teaching reflects the reform efforts?

4. What do you think English language education should be like in Korea?

## Appendix D

### Informed consent form for interviews and classroom observations

Georgia State University  
Department of Applied Linguistics and ESL  
Informed Consent Form

**Title:** Korean teachers' beliefs about English language education and their impacts upon Ministry of Education-initiated reforms

**Investigators:** John Murphy (PI) and Cheong Min Yook (student PI)

**I. Purpose of the Research:** This study investigates the relationship between Korean EFL teachers' beliefs about English language education in the Korean context, their perceptions of the Ministry of Education initiated reforms, and the degree to which they may be implementing the reforms in their classroom teaching. You are invited to participate in the study because you are Korean EFL teachers. The study includes interviews and class observations. 10 teacher participants will be recruited for the interviews and class observations. Participation will require about six hours of your time.

**II. Procedure:** Interviews will be conducted in your school, and class observations will take place in your classroom. You will be interviewed three times, and each interview will take about 90 minutes. Your class will be observed twice, and each class observation will be done during your regular 40 to 50-minute class. You will be interviewed first. After this interview, your class will be observed. This first class observation will be followed by a second interview, which in turn will be followed by a second class observation. After the second class observation, you will be interviewed one more time. You will be paid 50,000 Korean won for your participation.

**III. Risks:** The risks of participating in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

**IV. Benefits:** Taking part in this research may not benefit you personally. However, the results of the research will show the role of English teachers' beliefs in reforming English education in Korea. This will help us find out more about how to improve English education in Korea.

**V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:** Participation in this research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**VI. Confidentiality:** We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Dr. John Murphy and Cheong Min Yook will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board). We will use a specially assigned number rather than your name on study records and it will be destroyed after the research is conducted. Your record will be stored in Cheong Min's protected computer. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear

when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in such a way that you will not be identified personally.

**VII. Contact Persons:** Contact either John Murphy at 1-404-413-5193, [jmmurphy@gsu.edu](mailto:jmmurphy@gsu.edu) or Cheong Min Yook at 010-4730-1463, [eslcmx@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:eslcmx@langate.gsu.edu) if you have questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 1-404-413-3513 or [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu).

**VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:** We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

**If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix E

## A start list of codes

## 1. Korean EFL teachers' beliefs

## 1.1. Teaching goals

1.1.1. Accuracy

1.1.2. Fluency

## 1.2. Teaching methods

1.2.1. Grammar-translation-oriented

1.2.2. Communication-oriented

1.2.3. Lecture

1.2.4. Group activities

## 1.3. Students

1.3.1. Needs and interests

1.3.2. Learning styles

## 1.4. Teacher's role

1.4.1. Teacher-centered

1.4.2. Student-centered

1.4.3. Classroom management

## 1.5. Assessment

## 2. Sources of teachers' beliefs

2.1. Experience as an EFL learner

2.2. Teacher education

2.3. Teaching experience

### 3. Perceptions of the government-initiated reforms

- 3.1. Communicative competence
- 3.2. Task-based language teaching
- 3.3. Authentic materials
- 3.4. Group activities
- 3.5. Early English learning
- 3.6. Cooperative teaching between native and non-native English-speaking teachers
- 3.7. Teaching English through English
- 3.8. Whole Language Approach
- 3.9. Performance assessment

### 4. Others

- 4.1. Class size
- 4.2. Textbooks
- 4.3. Other materials

## Appendix F

## Examples of manual coding of interview data

Betty Interview #3	Start list 1.1.2. (fluency as teaching goal)
3	<p>           육: 선생님 이걸 좀 어려운 질문일 것 같은데 선생님 생각하시기에 우리나라 영어교육의 목표는 무엇이 되어야 된다고 생각하세요?            ① <u>반을 일단 외국사람하고 불편없이 얘기할 수 있는 어 뭐 하얏든 기본적인 준비를 한</u>  <u>고등학교때까지는 해서 보낼 수 있는거? 그리고 그 다음에 계속 대학교를 가서 공부를 해야 되니까 어</u>  <u>뭐 학원같은거 안 다녀도 기본적으로 원서는 자기 전공원서는 읽어낼 수 있는 거. 고까지가 저는</u>  <u>고등학교 수업에서는 좀 이루어졌으면 하는 건데 보통 다 보면 대학교 들어가 가지고 토익학원 다니고</u>  <u>하잖아요. 그리고 대부분 또 원서는 또 해석본 가지고 하니까 사실 돈도 배로 쓰는 거 같고 좀 아까운</u>  <u>거 같아요.</u> </p>

Henry Interview #3	Start list 1.1.2. (fluency as teaching goal)
3	<p>           우리나라 영어.. 한국에서의 영어교육의 목표는 무엇이 되어야 할까요?            ① <u>한국에서 영어교육의 목표는 그냥 외국인을 만나는게 두려워하지 않고 그냥 다같이 간단한 대화를</u>  <u>할 수 있는 능력만 기르면 된다. 그냥 간단한 생활영어들..</u>            육: 외국인을 두려워하지 않고 자기가 할 수 있는 간단한 의사표현을 할 수 있는 정도?            황: 네~ 뭐 그정도만 하면 안 되겠습니까? 뭐 전문가적인건.. 나보고 계약 하라고 하면 하겠나? 그건 뭐            전문가들이 또 뭐 할 수 있을거고..         </p>