

The Effectiveness of Three Different English Instruction Approaches

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Abstract

There have been a lot of reporting regarding continued problems of English education instructions in Korea because of too much emphasis on grammar-translation method.

This study focuses on the effectiveness of three different English instruction approaches, Whole Language Approach (Whole), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and E-mail for English Teaching (E-mail).

The data were collected in May, 2017 by distributing survey questionnaire to the first and second year students in four classes in the Department of Tourism English at a selected university in Jeju. 12 questions in the questionnaire were used to measure how the participants perceived the importance of various goals regarding three different communication-based English instruction approaches, Whole Language Approach (Whole), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and E-mail for English Teaching (E-mail).

Participants in this study are most interested in Whole Language Approach (Whole) followed by English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and E-mail for English Teaching (E-mail).

Key words : English instructional approaches, Communication-based English instruction, Whole Language Approach, E-mail for English Teaching, ESP (English for Specific Purposes), communicative competence, globalization, Jeju

1. Introduction

The significance of English education for globalization in Jeju has been emphasized since Jeju has become an important tourism hub after its designation as free international city in 2001. Persistent effort to increase competitiveness of English education in Jeju has been made, but students' English proficiency, especially speaking and writing competence, has not improved significantly.

The objective of this study is to investigate university English curriculum designed to help undergraduate students improve their English language skills in order to find out appropriate needs for English curriculum design and development of teaching method. Therefore, undergraduate students' perception on their English curriculum at a selected university in Jeju will be investigated in this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Characteristics of EFL (English as a foreign language)

EFL is defined as "the role of English in countries where it is taught as a subject in schools but not used as a medium of instruction in education nor as a language of communication" (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992, p.123-124). Countries such as Korea, China, and Japan are regarded as EFL settings. Since English is not used as a communication tool in these countries, students rarely use English in their daily lives. One of the most significant reasons students study English in Korea is to pass the national college entrance examination or receive a good score on tests such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), International English Language Test System (IELTS), or TEPS (Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University). According to Richards (1985, p.2-3), "it may be an important school subject and it may be necessary to pass an examination in English to enter a university. It may be the language of certain courses at a university, or at least of a large percentage of the students' textbooks. It may be related for people who work in a tourism, business, and for some sections of the civil service."

There are some distinctive characteristics of EFL classes.

First, most English instructions in EFL settings focus on grammar and reading comprehension in preparation for English exams more than communicative abilities. As mentioned above, students study English mainly because they want to obtain high scores on the national college entrance examination or on English proficiency tests such as

TOEFL, TOEIC, or TEPS.

Second, English teachers in EFL settings are usually non-native speakers of English. English teachers and students have the same native language (L1), and it is a good medium of instruction for teaching English as a foreign language. However, English teachers in Korea have less proficiency in English than native English-speaking teachers. Since students have less direct contact with speakers of English, they can rarely apply what they learn to communicative situations with native speakers of English. Gebhard (1996, p. 4) maintains that "Quite often the only comprehensible English some EFL students hear and read is in the classroom. Therefore, English teachers in Korea are concerned with finding ways to get students to speak English in class as well as to prepare for English tests.

Third, students do not have enough chances to encounter authentic materials since teaching materials in EFL are usually provided in textbooks prescribed by the government. Therefore, some EFL teachers try to use supplemental materials of their own choice.

2.2. Communication-based English instruction

2.2.1. Whole Language Approach

Whole Language Approach is defined as "a way of bringing together a view of language, a view of learning, a view of people, in particular two special groups of people: kids and teachers" (Goodman, 1986, p.5). Whole language approach emphasizes meaningful and authentic learning environment where language is not separated into parts, but remains whole (Gaburo, 1988; Goodman, 1986). The followings are whole language teaching elements that are considered to be significant to language teaching and learning (Weaver, 1990; Edelsky, et al., 1991)

- Language learning in a learner-centered curriculum
- Language learning to learn the use of wholeness
- Students are engaged in reading and writing, speaking and listening, for a variety of authentic purposes
- Teacher as an ingenious innovator, facilitator, provider, astute observer, co-learner in a classroom community
- The richness of literature and authentic materials (material from a variety of sources, including textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and references)

2.2.2. E-mail for English Teaching

E-mail (Electronic mail) is a way of sending messages using computers. Recent studies have reported that the Internet and e-mail are useful

tools for enhancing second or foreign language (L2) learners' communicative competence since they provide language learners with a lot of chances to use the language for communicative purposes and motivate students to learn English (Allen & Thompson, 1995; Kelm, 1992a; Chun, 1994; Warschauer, 1995; Chun & Plass, 2000). Some characteristics of e-mail or the Internet-based foreign or second language instruction are as follows (Beauvois, 1992; Kelm, 1992b; Allen & Thompson, 1995):

- Students feel motivated their L2 learning through network-based interaction.
- It fosters authentic communication and uses authentic materials whenever possible.
- It also provides authentic sources for target language and culture and an empowering environment where nonnative speakers can freely express their emotions and thoughts in the target language.

2.2.3. ESP (English for Specific Purposes)

ESP is designed for non-native English speakers who need specific knowledge of English for their profession. This is a learning-centered approach as well as a communication-based approach (Hutchinson & Waters, 1993). ESP can be generally divided into two main types, English for academic purposes (EAP) and English for occupational purposes (EOP). However, ESP can be categorized in a lot of ways, since there are various ESP courses provided around the world (Johns, 1991). The followings are some characteristics of ESP according to Flowerdew & Peacock (2001).

- It is relevant to the learner.
- Being focused on the learners' needs, it wastes no time.
- It is more cost effective than 'General English.'

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Question

This study investigates undergraduate students' perceptions on the effectiveness of three different communication-based English instructions, Whole Language Approach, E-mail for English Teaching, and English for Specific Purposes.

3.2. English instructional approaches

3.2.1. Whole Language Approach

It captures the holistic and overlapping nature of the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Integrating the four language skills is emphasized for English instruction in this approach. In the present study, the Whole Language Approach is represented by questions 1–4 on the survey

questionnaire.

3.2.2. E-mail for English Teaching

For the purpose of this study, using the Internet for English instruction is included in this category. In the present study, E-mail for English Teaching is represented by questions 5–8 on the survey questionnaire.

3.2.3. ESP (English for Specific Purposes)

In the present study, ESP is represented by questions 9–12 on the survey questionnaire. Table 1 shows survey items of the instructional approaches.

Table 1: Survey Items of the Instructional Approaches.

Major Instructional Approaches	Importance of goals regarding the approaches
1. Whole Language Approach	1, 2, 3, 4
2. E-mail for English Teaching	5, 6, 7, 8
3. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)	9, 10, 11, 12

3.3. Participants

A total of 84 undergraduate students participated in this study: 37 first year and 47 second year undergraduate students in the Department of Tourism English in Jeju participated in this study in the spring semester of 2017. The majority of the participants have studied English from the age of nine in the elementary school. Their English proficiency level, especially listening and speaking competence is different, since they have had different life experiences such as opportunities of interacting with English native speakers and cultural exposure of English-spoken countries. The selected university in this study adopts more communication-based approaches to meet the students' needs for listening and speaking competence.

3.4. Data collection

3.4.1 Survey questionnaire

The research instrument was a questionnaire to elicit students' perceptions regarding Whole Language Approach, E-mail for English Teaching, and English for Specific Purposes. The Korean version of the survey questionnaire was distributed to the students in four classes in May, 2017 to prevent any errors caused by misunderstanding of English. The survey questionnaire stated the purpose of this research and asked for cooperation (see Appendix A and B). The questionnaire items

were adopted from Nam's Dissertation (2005).

3.4.2. Response Rate

84 first and second year undergraduate students received a copy of the survey questionnaire. 72 completed student surveys were received by May 10, 2017. Table 2 shows the return rates for the completed surveys based on each selected class.

Table 2: Summary of Response Rate

Participants	Number of Sample	Number of Responses	Response Rate (%)
Class A (first year)	18	18	100%
Class B (first year)	19	18	94.7%
Class A (second year)	25	19	76%
Class B (second year)	22	17	77.2%
Total	84	72	86.9%

3.4.3 Perceived Importance of Goals

Twelve statements in the questionnaire were used in order to measure how participants in this study perceived the importance of goals regarding three different English instructional approaches such as Whole Language Approach, E-mail for English Teaching, and English for Specific Purposes. The five response scales were as follows:

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Moderately Disagree 3. Uncertain 4. Moderately Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Table 3 provides the means and standard deviations for the perceived importance of goals regarding three instructional approaches, Whole Language Approach (Whole), E-mail for English Teaching (E-mail), English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Items 1 to 4 refer to Whole, 5 to 8 refer to E-mail, and 9-12 refer to ESP.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations (SD) of the Subjects' Perceptions of the Importance of Goals

The goal of College English instruction is to teach students	Mean (SD) (N=72)
1. To integrate and apply listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to daily life use.	3.556 (0.584)
2. To cultivate creative and critical thinking ability through English teaching.	3.291 (0.536)
3. To better understand English speakers and their way of life.	3.375 (0.569)

4. To master the English language as a whole, as an integrated ability.	3.486 (0.592)
5. To obtain relevant information written in English by using the Internet.	3.361 (0.617)
6. To discuss problems and interact with teachers or classmates in English through e-mail.	3.069 (0.510)
7. To communicate through e-mail with people all over the world.	2.972 (0.502)
8. To improve the ability to immediately read and respond through e-mail	3.056 (0.521)
9. To read professional articles, journals, and magazines written in English.	3.181 (0.607)
10. To experience the process of foreign language learning	3.389 (0.676)
11. To better use the English language in the specific area of a profession	3.389 (0.538)
12. To write English professional reports or research papers	3.056 (0.498)

4. Data Analysis

When the completed questionnaires were returned, the composite means for each instructional approach and standard deviation were calculated and then summarized in Table 3.

5. Findings

In terms of the importance of various goals of university English instruction, the above data in Table 3 show that participants put the highest importance to statement 1 (To integrate and apply listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to daily life use) with a mean score of 3.556, and the lowest importance to statement 7 (To communicate through e-mail with people all over the world) with a mean score of 2.972. The data in Table 3 indicates that Whole Language Approach (Whole) is viewed as most important instructional approach followed by English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and E-mail for English Teaching (E-mail).

6. Conclusion

This study investigates university students' perceptions regarding three different English instruction approaches in the Department of Tourism English at a selected university in Jeju for the spring semester of 2017. Participants in

this study tend to be most interested in Whole Language Approach (Whole), whereas E-mail for English Teaching (E-mail) is viewed the least appealing approach among three different English instruction approaches.

A lot of experts in EFL have maintained that the whole language teaching approach is an effective way of satisfying the needs of college students as well as children and secondary school students because of its empowering qualities. Freeman and Freeman (1989) found out that students in their research had greater control over their own learning goals. Otero's research (1993) also maintained that ESL students' literacy skills at the post-secondary level were developed thanks to the effectiveness of the whole language approach.

To enhance whole language approach in class, students should be engaged in reading and writing, speaking and listening for various authentic purposes and they should be responsible for their own engagement in language learning. As for teachers, they act as an ingenious innovator, facilitator, and provider in a classroom. Concerning designing curriculum, various literature and authentic materials (material including textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and references) should be provided to students and a learner-centered curriculum should be emphasized in language learning.

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APPENDIX A

THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
(ENGLISH VERSION)

Following are 12 statements that ask what you believe about the nature or the goals of college English education. Please read each statement and circle the number that corresponds to the level of your agreement. Again, there are no right or wrong answers, only what you believe about each of the statements. Respond with what you believe are the goals of studying English as it is being taught in your class. Use the same scale as before:

The goal of College English instruction is to teach students	SD	MD	UN	MA	SA
1. To integrate and apply listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to daily life use.	1	2	3	4	5
2. To cultivate creative and critical thinking ability through English teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
3. To better understand English speakers and their way of life.	1	2	3	4	5
4. To master the English language as a whole, as an integrated ability.	1	2	3	4	5
5. To obtain relevant information written in English by using the Internet.	1	2	3	4	5
6. To discuss problems and interact with teachers or classmates in English through e-mail.	1	2	3	4	5
7. To communicate through e-mail with people all over the world.	1	2	3	4	5
8. To improve the ability to immediately read and respond through e-mail	1	2	3	4	5
9. To read professional articles, journals, and magazines written in English.	1	2	3	4	5
10. To experience the process of foreign language learning	1	2	3	4	5
11. To better use the English language in the specific area of a profession	1	2	3	4	5
12. To write English professional reports or research papers	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
(KOREAN VERSION)

다음은 대학교 영어교육의 목표에 대한 여러분의 의견을 묻고자 합니다. 정오답이 있는 것이 아니고, 여러분 자신의 믿음에 근거하여 수업시간에 행해지는 영어교육의 목표에 관해 응답해 주십시오.

대학교 영어교육의 목적	강한부정	부정	확실치 않음	동의	강한동의
1. 듣기, 말하기, 읽기, 쓰기 기술을 통합하여 일상생활에 적용한다.	1	2	3	4	5
2. 영어교육을 통해 창조적이고 비판적 사고력을 기른다.	1	2	3	4	5
3. 영어원어민과 그들의 생활 방식을 더 잘 이해한다	1	2	3	4	5
4. 영어를 전체적이고 통합된 능력으로 습득한다.	1	2	3	4	5
5. 이메일이나 인터넷을 사용하여 영어로 쓰여진 관련 정보를 얻는다.	1	2	3	4	5
6. 이메일을 사용하여 교수와 학생들이 문제를 토론하고 상호 의견을 교환한다.	1	2	3	4	5
7. 전 세계 사람들과 이메일로 의사소통을 하도록 한다.	1	2	3	4	5
8. 이메일을 통해 즉시 읽고 응답하는 능력을 향상시킨다.	1	2	3	4	5
9. 전문적인 기사, 잡지, 학술지를 영어로 읽는 능력을 기른다.	1	2	3	4	5
10. 외국어 학습 과정을 경험한다.	1	2	3	4	5
11. 구체적인 전문 분야에서 영어를 더 잘 사용하도록 한다.	1	2	3	4	5
12. 전문 영어보고서나 연구 논문을 쓰는 능력을 기른다.	1	2	3	4	5