

# Students' opinions about the effectiveness of college English instruction

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## Abstract

Jeju has been transformed into an international city and English has been a significant communication means in Jeju. Since English is essential for globalization, English education in Jeju has become the focus of public attention.

The purpose of this study is to examine students' opinions about the effectiveness of college English instruction in the Department of Tourism English in Jeju.

Subjects' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of college English instruction were analyzed in this study. The data showed students generally agreed that native and Korean teachers' team teaching is helpful (M=4.261), that the courses are practical and useful for the students' career development (M= 3.565), and that generally, English learning in the class is satisfactory (M=3.543). However, students disagreed with the idea that the English courses help students understand foreign cultures (M= 2.935).

### Key words :

globalization of Jeju, English education, Jeju global education city project, college English instruction, communicative competence, language and culture

## Introduction

Jeju has become a hub for international tourism and there has been marked expansion in tourism because of increased international awareness of Jeju. Jeju has been one of the top spots for tourists visiting Korea. Jeju is famous for its natural UNESCO world heritage site, Jeju volcanic island, and lava tubes. It is the only place to be nominated as a Biosphere Reserve (2002), World Natural Heritage Site (2007), and Global Geopark (2010). It was also voted as one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature in 2011. Such designations make Jeju a unique tourism attraction not only for domestic but also for foreign tourists.

Since Jeju has been popular among tourists because of its global reputation, a large number of tourists from overseas are expected. Jeju will be transformed into an international city and English will be an important communication tool in Jeju. In this respect, the importance of English in Jeju cannot be overemphasized.

The aim of this study is to know the university students' general opinions about the effectiveness of college English instruction in Jeju to examine relevant needs for further college English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum design and instructional development.

## Literature Review

### 1. English Education in Korea

EFL, an acronym for English as a foreign language, 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). Korea, Japan and China are considered as EFL settings and each country shares a similar culture, history and first language and a common bond through the cultural identity still exists (Gebhard, 1996).

English is considered as one of the most significant academic subjects in EFL situations. One of the

most important reasons that students study English very hard in Korea is to pass the national college entrance examination or receive satisfying results on English proficiency tests such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Test System (IELTS), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), TEPS (Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University) or Oral Practical Interview Computer (OPIc) for their successful employment. Most prestigious South Korean companies require job applicants to submit their English proficiency test score of TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS, or OPIc.

However, Korean English education has been criticized for its too grammar-oriented teaching method. There have been researches on problems of English education in public schools in Korea despite Korean students' spending at least six years from middle school to high school studying English. In spite of this lengthy experience in English, students' low communicative proficiency has caused concerns about English education in Korea. According to Kim (2004), the English instructional methodology in Korea has been blamed for not being practical because of its too much stresses on grammar and English translation for the national college entrance examination. Richards maintained that “it may be an important school subject and it may be necessary to pass an examination in English to enter a university” (Richards, 1985, p.2–3).

Interestingly, South Korean students spend a lot of time and money for their English education in the world, but their competence in English is still lacking. According to Jin (2006), Korean students' English proficiency is lacking although they spend a lot of time and money for their English education in the world.

A number of Korean students have lost their interests in English due to the instructional methodology which mainly emphasizes English sentence translation and grammar. Nunan (2003) said, “In [Korea], informants spoke frankly of the fact that the quality of English language education in the public sector was so poor that ‘no one learns English in school’”(p. 606).

As mentioned above, English is considered as a very significant academic subject in Korea, but students do not have a lot of opportunities to use what they learn in communicative situations. The South Korean government has tried to change the English education policies, but it has still been struggling to improve students' English proficiency. A lot of Korean students' communicative competence such as speaking and writing skills is low compared to students from other European countries

## 2. Globalization in Jeju and English Education

In the era of globalization, English is an indispensable tool of international communication, so English has become the most widely taught foreign language in the world (Kachru & Nelson, 1996).

The globalization of Jeju has had a significant impact on English education. Since English is essential for globalization in Jeju, English education has become the focus of public attention for stimulating an English friendly environment to change Jeju into a successful free international city.

Jeju has become a major hub for English education after the implementation of Jeju global education city project. Jeju global education city project, a national project of the Korean government, aims at improving Korea's competitiveness by providing Korean and international students with high quality English education in Korea.

The Jeju global education city project which pursues enhancing competitive English education has been implemented successfully by absorbing the demand for studying abroad through world-class educational services. Jeju has established prestigious international schools like North London Collegiate School (NLCS), a prestigious school of the United Kingdom, Branksome Hall Asia, a prominent girls' school in Canada, and St. Johnsbury Academy (SJA) for the purpose of reducing the amount of money spent on studying overseas. Jeju international schools have become a promising alternative to sending their children abroad and Jeju has revitalized the nation's international education

for domestic and international students so far.

## METHODOLOGY

### 1. Research Design

This study aims at investigating the students' general opinions about the effectiveness of college English instruction among undergraduate students in the Department of Tourism English in Jeju.

### 2. Instrumentation

Eight items in the questionnaire were designed to measure the students' general opinions about the effectiveness of college English instruction in Jeju. These items were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from "1" representing Strongly Disagree to "5" representing Strongly Agree. The five response scales were as follows:

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

### 3. Participants

The participants for the questionnaire were 29 freshmen and 18 sophomore from the Department of Tourism English in Jeju in South Korea in the spring semester of 2018. Their English proficiency level varies greatly from 920 to 295 in TOEIC scores. Also, their cultural exposure of English-spoken countries and opportunities of interacting with English native speakers vary because of their different life experiences.

### 4. Data Collection

#### 4.1. Survey questionnaire

A questionnaire was conducted for 67 students in the class after instruction for twenty minutes in May, 2018. Nam's Dissertation (2005) was adopted for the study. The research instrument was a questionnaire to elicit students' general opinions about the effectiveness of college English instruction. Among the items, eight questions directly related to the present study were extracted as shown in Table 1. The Korean version of the

survey questionnaire was distributed to the students in four classes 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).

〈Table 1. Questionnaire about students' general opinions about the effectiveness of college English instruction〉

General Statement of Current Effectiveness of College English Instruction
1. The courses are practical and useful for the students' career development
2. Generally, English learning in the class is satisfactory
3. Audio-visual aids employed in class help English learning.
4. The English courses help students understand foreign cultures.
5. The current English courses are designed to motivate learning.
6. Students do not need to attend a private language institution.
7. The college English courses help students to develop communication ability
8. Native and Korean teachers' team teaching is helpful

#### 4.2. Response Rate

67 first and second year undergraduate students received a copy of the survey questionnaire. 46 completed student surveys were received in May, 2018. 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)	21	14	66.7%
Class B (first year)	22	14	63.6%
Class A (second year)	15	9	60%
Class B (second year)	9	9	100%
Total	67	46	68.7%

#### 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.

#### Results

##### 1. Opinions about the Effectiveness of College English Instruction

Table 3 provides the means and standard deviations for students' perceptions about the effectiveness of English instruction in Jeju.

〈Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations (SD) of Subjects' Opinions about the Effectiveness of College English Instruction in Jeju〉

General Statement of Current Effectiveness of College English Instruction	Mean (SD) (N=46)
1. The courses are practical and useful for the students' career development	3.565 (0.946)
2. Generally, English learning in the class is satisfactory	3.543 (0.832)
3. Audio-visual aids employed in class help English learning.	3.500 (0.821)
4. The English courses help students understand foreign cultures.	2.935 (0.597)
5. The current English courses are designed to motivate learning.	3.239 (0.667)
6. Students do not need to attend a private language institution.	3.043 (0.477)
7. The college English courses help students to develop communication ability	3.304 (0.701)
8. Native and Korean teachers' team teaching is helpful	4.261 (0.983)

When analyzing subjects' perceptions reflected in each item, as Table 3 shows, the students had some similarities and differences in agreement with each item. Students generally agreed that native and Korean teachers' team teaching is helpful (M=4.261), that the courses are practical and useful for the students' career development (M=3.565), and that generally, English learning in the class is satisfactory (M=3.543). However, students disagreed with the idea that the English courses help students understand foreign cultures (M=2.935).

The smallest difference was found in statement

one and two, which implies that the courses are practical and useful for the students' career development and English learning in the class is satisfactory. In addition, students have various opinions in statement one (SD = 0.946) and statement eight (SD= 0.983).

## Conclusion

This study aims at investigating students' general opinions about the effectiveness of college English instruction among undergraduate students in the Department of Tourism English in Jeju. The data indicated that the participants in this study generally agreed that native and Korean teachers' team teaching is helpful (M=4.261), that the courses are practical and useful for the students' career development (M= 3.565), and that generally, English learning in the class is satisfactory (M=3.543). However, the participants generally disagreed with the idea that the English courses help them understand foreign cultures (M= 2.935). They appeared to believe that the course was not beneficial to gain information about English-speaking countries' culture, even though providing cultural information is essential part of English education.

Learning a language is learning cultural customs as well as learning the alphabet, the meaning and the grammar rules. According to Taylor (1979), an individual language speaker's effectiveness in a foreign language is directly related to his or her understanding of the culture of that language.

Language is intertwined with culture because they have a homologous relationship. Since there is an unbreakable link between language and culture, language teaching should always contain some explicit reference to the culture. Foreign language teachers should provide students with cultural studies and try not only to improve students' communication competence but also to develop their culture awareness. Especially, in the global society like Jeju, more cultural education programs should be included in the school curriculum because

of its crucial role in foreign language learning.

The implementation of Jeju global education project has been successful and it should help to make Jeju successful to the globalization of people by understanding foreign culture as well as foreign languages.

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Receiving Date: September 4, 2018

Reviewing Date: September 11, 2018

Reporting Date of Article Appearance: September 18, 2018