Secondary Teachers’ Perception on English Education Policies in Korea

Jihyeon Jeon
Ehwa Women University, Korea

Hyoshin Lee
Konkuk University Glocal Campus, Korea

Due to the expected value of English proficiency for living in a global society, acquiring English proficiency has become a major concern for many people in Korea. This attention is because people in Korea believe English is providing them with premium opportunities to better their lives such as being admitted to prestigious schools or getting high-paying jobs. The differential investment in learning English thus has yielded a new form of social inequality, dividing people between the English rich and the English poor. Perceiving the potential negative effects of the English divide and the importance of equipping Koreans’ English proficiency, the Korean government has put effort and strategic investment into improving public English education in Korea. Studies on policies have often been presented in a multilingual context where the concept of language policies, language education policies, foreign language policies, and English language education policies are somewhat blurred. Looking at the English education policies in a monolingual society like Korea exclusively can present a focused view on the effectiveness of English education policies. This study presents the key policies put into practice to improve the quality of English education in Korea and highlights secondary teachers’ responses to those policies in attaining the policy goals. A total of 1039 secondary teachers working in Daegu participated in the survey administered twice: 557 in 2010 and 482 in 2016. The perceptual changes are discussed with the participants’ comments included in the results. The study will provoke discussion and intuition for managing English education policies in similar contexts.

Keywords: EFL, English education policy, secondary

Introduction: English Education - A Societal Concern in Korea

English proficiency has been recognized as an ability that is required to enter better schools and to get better jobs by the majority of Koreans - from children to adult workers. Thus, the competition for acquiring English is so demanding that the investment in time, money, and efforts are at the extreme end. According to national statistics (Statistics Korea, 2016), the total expenses in Korea for private education in 2015 were estimated to be about $17.8 billion. Statistics also reveal that 68.8% of the students enrolled in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools seek private education after school, and each student was spending about $220 per month for private education. At the elementary-school level, English education (42.9%) had the highest participation rate, whereas participation in private math education was high for middle school (51.9%) and high school (27.7%).

It is perhaps not just Korea that faces excessive investments in acquiring English and a societal
imbalance. Interestingly, the English-learning fever has been a hovering issue in other East Asian countries (Lamb & Coleman, 2008; Wei, 2006). Based on the Indonesian cases, Lamb & Coleman (2008) claim that the Indonesians put value in English that “goes far beyond its actual practical value in daily life” (p. 189). In addition, they report that access to English in Indonesia is not distributed evenly, and learning English is heavily dependent on spending money on private education outside the school system. Wei (2006) also comments:

...the interest in acquiring English proficiency has become fiercely competitive...Sectors other than educational settings are aspiring to require their perspective employees to provide credentials for adequate English proficiency...and consequently, an ever increasing number of cram schools have sprung up to meet the demands...(p.92)

English ability creates a new form of societal inequality, called the English divide (Jeon, April, 2009). In fact, in one study (Jeong & Jeon, 2013) investigating what English means to their lives in college, Korean college students reported that their ability in English affects their self-efficacy or self-confidence as a college student. For college students, English ability is providing better opportunities for their employment, internships, or further study opportunities such as participating in overseas programs. In another case study (Noh & Jeon, 2012) of a Korean global company, the employees expressed that English provides opportunities in their work life. People who are proficient in English generally have higher salaries and receive promotions faster. Furthermore, people with good English ability are more confident maintaining a positive self-image and thus are more easily recognized for their work performance, assigned for new or important duties, and can have opportunities for further self-development through participating overseas training, workshops, and graduate studies. Since the English divide is mainly caused by the difference in the investment of English studies, English exposure, and English ability, it can yield a difference in opportunities in various aspects of the Korean way of life. English ability is gained through investment in English studies or the opportunities to access to English.

The participation rates for private English education show the existing gap between the regions and the income levels. The participation rate for private English education by the monthly average income for each household demonstrates substantial difference between income levels. Only 18.6% of households with a monthly income of $1,000 pay for private English education, versus 76.9% for households with a monthly income of $7,000 or more. Those with a household income of $1,000 spend about $62 per month for private English education. On the other hand, those with a household income of $7,000 spend more than $200 per month for private English education. The participation rates by region in Korea also exhibit a gap. The participation rate in private English education is the highest (70.4%) in the Gangnam area in Seoul, while the average rate (40.6%) in towns and villages is much lower (Oh, 2011).

By enforcing English education policies, The Korean Ministry of Education (KMOE) has been working hard to reduce the gap, the English divide, by providing fair opportunities of English language learning to meet the societal needs for English proficiency. KMOE expects to improve Koreans English proficiency by strengthen English education at school and to reduce ever-growing private English education in Korea. However, it is not known if these policies are effective in achieving the attempted goals. While studies on language policies are growing to include complex issues, there have not been many studies focusing on foreign language education policies, in particular, focusing on English language education policies in an EFL context. This article aims to unfold (1) the English education policies practiced in Korea and (2) the perceptions of secondary teachers on the effect of these policies in achieving the policy goals. The study will provide information and trigger discussions for policy makers and practitioners in contexts similar to Korea.
Background: Understanding Language Education Policy Studies

In order to understand English education policy in Korea, terms such as language policy, language education policy\textsuperscript{1}, foreign language education policy, and EFL education policy need to be clarified. Studies on language policy probably stem from multilingual societies where there is a need to make clear which language is chosen as the official language as the medium of instruction for education and how the official language is related to the students’ native or home language (Spolsky, 2004). Language policy studies deal with the status of languages and the language varieties, the language forms practiced by people, and people learning those languages (Cooper, 1989). Spolsky (2004) further conceptualized language policy as having three main components: 1) The purpose and the use of particular language variety by the members of the speech community; 2) the members’ beliefs about what they should do; and 3) the management to modify the practices of language use. Example research questions on language policy may include: Which varieties of the languages are used by certain speech communities? What is the status of certain language varieties? What is the result of any particular policy? What is the most desirable policy for certain groups?

While language policy is more inclusive, language education policy, a synonym to Cooper’s (1989) language acquisition policy, focuses on managing language use practices. Spolsky (2004) considers the term language management as identical to language education because management is modifying the length of learning by adding a language or switching to another language variety. Typically dealing with bilingual or multilingual societies, a common research question may include: Which language variety should be taught to whom and for what purpose?

Foreign language education policy is a sub-set of language education policy focusing on the issues of foreign language management where there is more than one foreign language that people learn. Example research questions may include: Which foreign language should be included as a school subject?

English education policy can be a sub-set of foreign language education policy in regions where English is considered to be a foreign language, and also can be a part of more general language policy in regions where English is used as an official language or in a multilingual context. Research questions may include: Should English be taught more than other languages? What is the effect of the policy on the use or the learning of English?

English as a Foreign Language Policy is found in countries like Korea where English is the most important foreign language. As English becomes more influential as the lingua-franca for business in the globalized world, some countries like Korea tend to emphasize English more than any other foreign language. In this context, English is taught as the most needed foreign language even though it is not officially used for school or business in a daily context. Example questions may include: What should be addressed in the national curriculum to make English education effective? English education policies in Korea deal with the curriculum, teacher selection and training years, hours of instruction, provision of the textbooks, and language proficiency examinations.

Studies on English education policies have been conducted ever since the English language was selected as the primary foreign language in Korea. There was a wealth of new research and policy related to English education during the Lee Myong Bak administration, aiming to intensify English education. Many studies were conducted on the performance of English education policies. Jeon, Lee and Lee (2015) analyzed the performance of the talk program aiming to reduce the English divide by placing native English speaking college students in positions to teach after-school English programs at elementary schools to provide English exposure opportunities to less-resourced elementary school students. Jeon, Choe, and Park (2012) focused on issues regarding ‘English conversation lecturers’ who were newly employed to teach spoken English in order to find ways to improve the system. Lee, Yoon, and Lee (2011) explored how to deploy human resources for English teaching by analyzing the effects of the English education polices of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education. In 2010, Kim, Woo, Jeon, and

\textsuperscript{1} Cooper(1989) calls it language acquisition theory; while Spolsky names it language management
Jin published the most comprehensive study to evaluate overall performance of all the English education policies intensified since 2008 by the previous Korean government, with massive data from over 200,000 participants-students, teachers, parents, scholars, and administrators. Similar nation-wide studies on English education policies were continuously conducted (Hwang, Hwang and Kim. 2011). All of these funded studies were conducted between 2008 and 2012. The studies, however, were done more or less in isolation without wide distribution of the results. Researchers did not consult other studies and thus there was little intensive discussion on overall policies. Since the beginning of the Park presidency in 2013, English education policy studies have been dramatically reduced. There have not been follow-up studies for these policies.

The purpose of this study is to look at key English education policies implemented in the Korean context and assess the performance of these policies through the perceptions of secondary teachers. In particular, the study aims to figure out how teachers perceive the effect of the policies in relation to the policy goals: 1) to improve English classroom teaching practice; 2) to improve students’ English communication ability; and 3) to reduce private education. Unfolding the policies that have been implemented to intensify English education in Korea all together and assess the relative performance of these policies in terms of cost effectiveness will help us gain deeper understanding of English education policies needed in Korean context and also provide meaningful implications for countries like Korea.

**English Education Policies in Korea**

The policies to improve Koreans’ English communication ability through strengthening English education at school, the focus of this study, can be categorized into specific purposes considering the aspects of learning (to make the English learning experience communicative), the human resources (to increase competent English teachers who can teach English in English), and the learning environment (to build an English-friendly learning environment), as summarized in Table 1.
TABLE 1
The Policies to improve Koreans’ English communication ability through strengthening school education (MEST, 2011)

| Policy Goal | Aspect | Purpose | Specifics |
|-------------|--------|---------|----------|
| To improve Koreans’ English communication ability through strengthening English education at school | Learning | Connecting the classes and the tests | (1) Developing and managing National level English Test that assesses all 4 skills |
| | -to make the learning experience communicative | | (2) For elementary schools |
| | | | -Increasing one more instruction hour for Grades 3–6 |
| | | | And supplementing materials accordingly |
| | | | (3) For secondary schools |
| | | | -Enforcing one hour of English conversation class weekly |
| | | | -Increasing English classes that students move to according to their levels |
| To improve Koreans’ English communication ability through strengthening English education at school | Human Resources | Making current teachers competent | (4) Strengthening teacher training |
| | -to increase teaching staff who can provide communicative classes | | -Increasing opportunities for needs-based intensive teacher training |
| | | | -Certifying qualified teachers for TEE (Teaching English in English) |
| | Environment | Making teaching staff proficient in English available | (5) Hiring and placing (Korean) English conversation teachers |
| | -to make it English-friendly to make class communicative | | (6) Placing English speaking (NS) teachers |
| | | | -Hiring qualified native English speaker teachers |
| | | | -Enhancing management systems for hiring and placing native English teachers |
| | Environment | Providing facilities to promote more exposure | (7) Providing English exploration classroom for elementary schools |
| | | | (8) Providing English only classrooms for secondary schools |
| | | | (9) Providing EBS (English Broadcasting Service) English classes |
| | | | (10) Managing focus schools for English education |

The Policies to Make the Learning Experience Communicative

Developing and managing a national level English test that assesses all four skills

The mismatch between a communicative class and the comprehension-based test has been frequently pointed out as one of the most critical problems in English education in Korea. For this reason, the former Korean governmental administration ambitiously initiated a plan to develop a national English test for Korean people that can assess the learners’ practical English ability, including the four skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Since the English part of the KSAT (Korean Scholastic Aptitude Test) is currently assessing only listening and reading comprehension skills, the development of NEAT (National...
English Ability Test) was expected to reduce the costs of overseas proficiency tests such as the TOEIC or TOEFL. Moreover, it is believed that the newly developed test will eventually replace the English part of the KSAT. The NEAT was developed as an IBT test to be used as a criterion for admissions or employment for two user groups: school-aged students and adults. The NEAT for students was originally planned to be the English part of the KSAT in 2015 after the government provided guidance and procedures regarding the KSAT three years before it was implemented. However, it was cancelled suddenly in 2013 by the Park administration, which claimed to be protecting students from further burden of stress and preventing unwanted need for private education. The NEAT for adults was also intended to be used as a criterion for employment for the public sectors, but it was also cancelled due to lack of demand after just a 3 year trial period (MOE, 2015).

Increasing teaching hours at elementary schools / requiring one conversation hour weekly

The lack of adequate exposure and practice were identified as major obstacles in developing the English speaking ability of Korean students. Thus, the decision was made to provide more exposure for younger-aged students and to provide more conversation opportunities in English class for secondary school students. For elementary schools, one more instruction hour per week was added from grades 3 to 6. As a result, grades 3 and 4 have had 2 hours of English classes since 2010 and grades 5 and 6 have had 3 hours of English classes since 2011. The textbooks are supplemented accordingly for these added instruction hours.

Increasing English classes to which students are moving according to their proficiency levels at secondary schools

For middle and high school students, an English conversation class of at least 1 hour per week has been required, and the number of English classes to which the students can join based on proficiency levels has been expanded. Additional activity books for these classes have also been provided since 2009. Furthermore, English assessments offered at the schools have been employing speaking and writing performance tests since 2010 (DMOE, 2016). The curriculum manual for planning and managing English classes was revised, and an assessment manual for students’ English speaking and writing performances at schools was also developed (KICE, 2012).

The Policies To Increase Competent Teachers Who Can Teach English in English

Increasing opportunities for intensive training / certifying teachers for TEE

To make teacher training programs effective for individual teachers, the opportunities to participate in intensive training programs increased from 1,200 participating teachers in 2008 to 1,500 participating teachers in 2009. Teachers can select the training types from daily training, cyber training, and camp training based on their needs. Overseas trainings and after-training sharing are more widely offered than before. In addition, in order to develop the competence to teach English through English, KMOE began to certify qualified teachers for TEE (Teaching English in English) in 2009. Despite the expectation that it could encourage teachers to develop their teaching competence, the TEE certificate policy was viewed as of burden on teachers and even a barrier by many teachers (Lee, 2010). Considering this concern, the TEE certificate policy was modified as a teacher training course certificate in most regional offices of education.
Hiring and placing English conversation teachers

Since 2010, English conversation teachers have been selected and placed by the KMOE in order to satisfy the needs for more teachers to teach the added English instruction hours at elementary schools and the English conversation class at secondary schools. The English conversation teachers are part-time instructors contracted for 1 year with a renewal opportunity for 4 years. Proficient speakers of English with teacher licensure are qualified to apply. The duties of the English conversation teachers also include teaching English classes (either at elementary schools or at secondary schools), being in charge of managing native English teachers, developing materials, and supporting any necessary English subject related tasks. There were 1,985 English conversation teachers at elementary schools and 2,746 teachers at secondary schools across the nation as of 2010 (Kim, Woo, Jeon, and Jin, 2010), along with 4,552 English conversation teachers as of 2015 (MOE, 2016).

Hiring native English-speaking teachers / enhancing management systems for native English-speaking teachers

The Ministry of Education in Korea has been hiring and placing native English-speaking (NS) teachers at schools through the EPIK (English Program in Korea) program since 1995.. As the needs for NS teachers are ever increasing, a system to provide truly qualified NS teachers to schools was needed. The Korean Ministry of Education, therefore, modified the system to select, train, place, and manage qualified teachers (MEST, 2011). The National Institute for International Education (NIIED) has been in charge of managing NS teachers with a database, hiring 54 in 1995, 600 in 2008, 1,263 in 2009, and 8,520 in 2012. This increasing number of NS teachers, however, has recently drastically decreased since the current government put greater emphasis on creativity and citizenship education with a lower level of attention placed on English education. In 2016, only 4,962 NS teachers were teaching at Korean primary and secondary schools, with most of those at primary schools (Yonhapnews, 2016).

The Policies To Build an English-friendly Learning Environment

Providing English exploration classroom (for elementary schools)

For elementary schools, there is a special classroom equipped with technology and English resources to make learning English fun and enjoyable through exploring various activities, reading English books, watching animations or movies, and having web-cam classes with native speakers. The English exploration classroom program was implemented at 4,322 elementary schools as of 2010.

Providing English only classroom (for secondary schools)

Secondary schools have an English-only-classroom. The English-only-classroom is used for level-based English, for an English library after school, and for web cam classes with native English-speaking teachers. 4,359 secondary schools had English-only-classrooms as of 2010 (MEST, 2011).

Maximizing the use of EBS English classes

The EBS (Educational Broadcasting System) English programs and Internet portal sites are provided to provide access to an English learning environment with quality programs free of charge. A year and a half after its launch in 2007, 1.6 million people had joined the site (www.ebse.co.kr), and over 15,000 viewers visited EBS daily. In fact, EBS is now broadcasting English learning programs for 20 hours a day—from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m., targeting various groups ranging from young kids in kindergarten to teachers.
People viewing EBS can freely download the learning materials and can see the program on demand free of charge. Additionally, teachers can freely download video clips for classes and can participate in online teacher training programs. It was reported that 14.3% of the EBS contents (primary school, 15.2%; middle school, 10.9%; high school, 16.2%) were linked to English classroom teaching practice (Kim et al., 2015).

Managing and supporting focus schools for English education

To disseminate good teaching practice skills, it is vital to explore what works best. To improve English education in public high schools, the KMOE selected 71 focus schools for English education in 2010. The selected focus schools have received unprecedented support for both hardware and software. For hardware, funding is provided for the English classroom and the teachers’ research office along with any required equipment. As for the content, the focus school secures a student-centered curriculum with more English class hours. Furthermore, the students at focus schools are provided with English classes surrounding the four skills and are provided with classes which reflect the proficiency levels of the students.

Methods

Participants

Questionnaire surveys to secondary teachers of English in the Daegu area (DMOE) were conducted in 2010 and 2016. As summarized in Table 1, a total of 562 participants (298 middle school teachers and 264 high school teachers) in 2010 and 482 participants (218 middle school teachers and 264 high school teachers) in 2016 responded to the online survey developed for this study.
TABLE 2  
Total number of responses and the number of responses used for the analysis

| Categories          | 2010 | 2016 | 2010 | 2016 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|
|                     | DMOE | %    | DMOE | %    |
| Working Place       |      |      |      |      |
| Middle school       | 298  | 53.0 | 218  | 45.2 |
| High school         | 264  | 47.0 | 264  | 54.8 |
| Total               | 562  | 100.0| 482  | 100.0|
| Gender              |      |      |      |      |
| Female              | 366  | 66.3 | 310  | 64.3 |
| Male                | 186  | 33.7 | 172  | 35.7 |
| Total               | 552  | 100.0| 482  | 100.0|
| Certificate         |      |      |      |      |
| Bachelor            | 353  | 63.6 | 304  | 63.1 |
| Master              | 188  | 33.9 | 169  | 35.1 |
| Doctor              | 14   | 2.5  | 9    | 1.9  |
| Total               | 555  | 100.0| 482  | 100.0|
| Teaching Year       |      |      |      |      |
| Less than 1 year    | 35   | 6.3  | 5    | 1.0  |
| 1-5 years           | 137  | 24.6 | 93   | 19.3 |
| 6-10 years          | 132  | 23.7 | 75   | 15.6 |
| 11-15 years         | 50   | 9.0  | 75   | 15.6 |
| 16-20 years         | 52   | 9.3  | 67   | 13.9 |
| Over 20 years       | 151  | 27.1 | 167  | 34.6 |
| Total               | 557  | 100.0| 482  | 100.0|

In addition to the questionnaire survey, an open-questionnaire was distributed to 10 secondary teachers of English from Seoul as well as 10 from Daegu in order to interpret the results of the questionnaire survey by asking them to provide any possible explanation for the given results.

Data collection and analysis

In order to gain insight into the perceptions of DMOE secondary teachers, the online survey was constructed regarding the English education policies in effect, and both 2010 and 2016 have been selected. The policies aiming to reduce the English divide were not included in the current study since they have been dramatically weakened since the beginning of the current government at the end of 2013. The selected policies to be analyzed were (1) Developing a national level English test to assess all the four skills (Currently the national level English test is assessing only listening and reading); (2) Increasing English classes by 1 more hour at elementary schools and supplementing materials accordingly; (3) Enforcing weekly English conversation class at secondary schools/Increasing the class number where students are moving according to their levels; (4) Increasing intensive teacher training/Certifying teachers for TEE; (5) Placing the English conversation teachers; (6) Placing the NS teachers; (7) Providing English exploration classrooms (Elementary schools); (8) Providing English only classrooms (Secondary schools); (9) Providing EBS classes; and (10) Managing English focus schools.

All of these policies can be equally important to make English education at school better. Considering the government funds are always limited and maximum effects are expected, it will be helpful to find the most cost-effective policies to attain the goal. In order to force participants to compare the policies based on cost effectiveness, as shown in Figure 2, after a short description about each policy was presented, the participating teachers were asked to select the most effective policies to achieve the goal: (1) to make English classes become more communicative; and (2) to improve the Korean students' English communication ability.
In order to assess how these secondary teachers view the policies in relation to private education, the participants were asked to predict the increase of private education for each policy by selecting one of the three options, e.g., after the enforcement of the policy, private education will decrease / stay about the same / increase. The 2010 participants were asked to predict the increase of private education within 3 years and after 6 years upon enforcing each policy. The 2016 participants were asked if, since the enforcement of the policy, private education has decreased / stayed about the same / increased.

Results

Teachers were asked to compare the policies and select what they perceive as the most cost-efficient policy to improve English teaching practice at school and to improve the English communication ability of students. In addition, they were asked to indicate their prediction of private education increase within a short period of time (within 3 years) and after a long time (after 6 years) and their perception of the increase in private education demand after 6 years. Finally in order to fairly interpret the results of the questionnaire survey, the teachers in Seoul as well as in Daegu were asked to provide any possible explanation for the given results.

Effective Policies Expected to Improve English Classroom Teaching Practice

Teachers were asked to compare the policies and select what they perceive as the most effective policy to improve English teaching practice at school. Table 3 shows the percent who selected each policy as the most cost efficient policy to achieve the goal to improve English classes at school.

| Policy     | 2010 | 2016 |
|------------|------|------|
|            | Middle School | High School | Middle School | High School |
| (1) NEAT   | 25   | 9.0   | 25   | 10.3   | 20   | 9.2   | 38   | 14.4  |
| (2) AdOne  | 18   | 6.5   | 15   | 6.2    | 12   | 5.5   | 18   | 6.8   |
| (3) SML    | 42   | 15.1  | 22   | 9.1    | 31   | 14.2  | 33   | 12.5  |
| (4) ITT/TEE| 24   | 8.6   | 17   | 7.0    | 30   | 13.8  | 33   | 12.5  |
| (5) ECT    | 27   | 9.7   | 19   | 7.8    | 9    | 4.1   | 12   | 4.5   |
| (6) NS     | 45   | 16.2  | 35   | 14.4   | 86   | 39.4  | 94   | 35.6  |
| (7) EECfES | 10   | 3.6   | 14   | 5.8    | 5    | 2.3   | 7    | 2.7   |
| (8) EoCfSS | 41   | 14.7  | 31   | 12.8   | 8    | 3.7   | 21   | 8.0   |
| (9) EBS    | 21   | 7.6   | 28   | 11.5   | 8    | 3.7   | 5    | 1.9   |
| (10) FS    | 25   | 9.0   | 37   | 15.2   | 9    | 4.1   | 3    | 1.1   |

The top three policies selected by middle school teachers in 2010 were (6) Placing the NS teachers (16.2%), (3) Enforcing weekly English conversation classes at secondary schools/Increasing the class...
number where students are moving according to their levels (15.1%), and (8) Providing English only classrooms (Secondary schools) (14.7%) whereas those in 2016 were (6) Placing the NS teachers (39.4%), (3) Enforcing weekly English conversation classes at secondary schools/Increasing the class number where students are moving according to their levels (14.2%), and (4) Increasing intensive teacher training/Certifying teachers for TEE (13.8%).

While the degree of expectation of the top three of the most cost-efficient policies in 2010 were similar, (6) Placing the NS teachers policy indicated a dramatic increase (39.4%) in 2016. It was followed by (3) Enforcing weekly English conversation classes at secondary schools/Increasing the class number where students are moving according to their levels (14.2%). This shows that middle school teachers saw the two policies as the most cost-efficient policies to improve English teaching practice at school. The increase in (4) Increasing intensive teacher training/Certifying teachers for TEE (12.5%) in 2016 and the decrease in (8) Providing English only classrooms (Secondary schools) in 2016 indicate that the middle school teachers place more emphasis on teachers' competence than the physical situation.

On the other hand, the perception of the high school teachers is similar to that of the middle school teachers. While the degree of the expectation of the top three most cost-efficient policies in 2010 were similar, (6) Placing the NS teachers policy indicated a dramatic increase (35.6%) in 2016. The degree of the following four policies was similar. This shows that high school teachers saw the (6) Placing the NS teachers policy as the most cost-efficient policy to improve English teaching practice at school.

Overall while they showed a decrease in (10) (15.2%→1.1%) and (8) Providing English only classroom (Secondary schools) in 2016 (12.8%→8.0%), they showed an increase in (1) Developing and managing a National English test that assesses all skills (10.3%→14.4%), (3) Increasing classes that students move to according to their levels (Secondary School) and (4) Increasing intensive teacher training/Certifying TEE (7.0%→12.5%).

Effective Policies Expected to Improve Students’ English Communication Ability

Table 4 shows the percent who selected each policy as the most cost efficient policy to achieve the goal to improve the English communication ability of students.

The top three policies selected by middle school teachers in 2010 were (6) Placing the NS teachers (20.4%), (8) Providing English only classrooms (Secondary schools) (13.9%), and (3) Enforcing weekly English conversation classes at secondary schools/Increasing the class number where students are moving according to their levels (12.4%) whereas those in 2016 were (6) Placing the NS teachers (53.7%), (4) Increasing intensive teacher training/Certifying teachers for TEE (9.6%), and (3) Enforcing weekly English conversation classes at secondary schools/Increasing the class number where students are moving according to their levels (9.2%).

They saw (6) Placing the NS teachers (20.4%) as the most cost-efficient policy to improve the English communication ability of students and the degree increased dramatically in 2016. The decrease in (8) Providing English only classroom (Secondary schools) (13.9→3.2%) in 2016 and the upgrade of (4) Increasing intensive teacher training/Certifying TEE (9.9→9.6%, 5th→3rd place) in 2016 indicate that the middle school teachers place more emphasis on teachers' competence than the physical situation.

On the other hand, the top three policies selected by high school teachers in 2010 were (10) Managing English focus schools (16%), (6) Placing the NS teachers (14.3%), and (8) Providing English only classrooms (Secondary schools) (12.3%) while those in 2016 were (6) Placing the NS teachers (43.2%), (1) Developing national level English tests to assess all the four skills (11.7%), and (2) Increasing English classes by 1 more hour per week at elementary schools and supplementing materials accordingly (11%). The policy (6) Placing the NS teachers was present among the selection both by middle school teachers and high school teachers in 2010 and 2016.
TABLE 4
Effective policy to improve students’ English communication ability (%)

| Policy      | 2010  | 2016  | 2010  | 2016  |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|             | Middle School | High School | Middle School | High School |
| (1) NEAT    | N      | %     | N      | %     | N      | %     | N      | %     |
| (2) AdOne   | 12     | 4.4   | 15     | 6.1   | 14     | 6.4   | 29     | 11.0  |
| (3) SML     | 34     | 12.4  | 20     | 8.2   | 20     | 9.2   | 23     | 8.7   |
| (4) ITT/TEE | 27     | 9.9   | 18     | 7.4   | 21     | 9.6   | 23     | 8.7   |
| (5) ECT     | 21     | 7.7   | 20     | 8.2   | 6      | 2.8   | 16     | 6.1   |
| (6) NS      | 56     | 20.4  | 35     | 14.3  | 117    | 53.7  | 114    | 43.2  |
| (7) EECfES  | 13     | 4.7   | 13     | 5.3   | 7      | 3.2   | 6      | 2.3   |
| (8) EoCfSS  | 38     | 13.9  | 30     | 12.3  | 7      | 3.2   | 13     | 4.9   |
| (9) EBS     | 18     | 6.6   | 29     | 11.9  | 4      | 1.8   | 6      | 2.3   |
| (10) FS     | 28     | 10.2  | 39     | 16.0  | 5      | 2.3   | 3      | 1.1   |
|             | 274    | 100.1 | 244    | 99.9  | 218    | 100   | 264    | 100   |

(1) [NEAT] Developing and managing a National English test that assesses all 4 skills (2) [AdOne] Adding one more instruction hour per week and supplementing materials accordingly (Elementary School); (3) [SML] Increasing classes that students move to according to their levels (Secondary School); (4) [ITT/TEE] Increasing intensive teacher training/ Certifying TEE (5) [ECT] Placing the English conversation teachers (6) [NS] Placing the NS teachers (7) [EECfES] Providing English exploration classroom (Elementary School) (8) [EoCfSS] Providing English only classroom (Secondary schools) (9) [EBS] Providing EBS(English Broadcasting Service) classes (10) [FS] Managing focus-school for English education

Expectation for Increase / Decrease of Private Education.

Since private education is one of the major variables that causes the English divide, the Korean government strives to implement policies that can reduce private education. For each policy currently being implemented, in 2010, teachers were asked (1) to indicate if they expect private education to increase, be the same, decrease within a short period of time (within 3 years); or (2) after a long time (after 6 years). After 6 years, beginning in 2016, teachers were asked to indicate whether they perceive each policy has influenced the increase of private education.

Those policies which were expected in 2010 to increase private education were evaluated similarly for the short term effect and for the long term effect. As shown in Table 5, the top 2 policies that teachers expected to increase private education within 3 years were (1) Developing and managing the National English test that assesses all four skills (67.5% for a short term and 35.4% for a long term) and (2) Adding 1 more instruction hour per week at elementary schools (52.1% for a short term and 31% for a long term). The result of the 2016 survey shows the two policies, (1) Developing and managing National English test that assesses all four skills (55.0%), and (2) Adding 1 more instruction hour per week at elementary schools (45.6%) are still viewed as the top 2 policies that have increased private education.

The teachers seemed to perceive that the policies being implemented would cause private education to be increased within a relatively short term. However, those increases would eventually decrease after some period of time. They saw the two policies of (1) Developing and managing the National English test that assesses all four skills and (2) Adding one more teaching hour per week and supplementing materials accordingly (Elementary School) contributing to the increase of private education for English.
TABLE 5
Teachers’ expectations of the policies’ influence on private education increase (%)

| Policy | Middle School | High School | Middle School | High School | Middle School | High School |
|--------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| (1) NEAT | 70.9 | 63.9 | 38.6 | 31.9 | 58.7 | 51.9 |
| (2) AdOne | 51.6 | 52.6 | 30.8 | 31.3 | 51.4 | 40.9 |
| (3) SML | 22.8 | 28.2 | 18.5 | 17.8 | 26.6 | 18.2 |
| (4) ITT/TEE | 13.9 | 12.9 | 10.6 | 11.0 | 13.3 | 15.2 |
| (5) ECT | 12.6 | 18.1 | 14.3 | 17.3 | 10.1 | 12.5 |
| (6) NS | 15.3 | 13.7 | 13.0 | 15.5 | 26.1 | 23.1 |
| (7) EECfES | 18.2 | 22.7 | 15.9 | 18.2 | 13.8 | 18.2 |
| (8) EoCfSS | 14.4 | 14.3 | 11.3 | 12.4 | 15.6 | 15.2 |
| (9) EBS | 10.0 | 20.4 | 11.7 | 15.5 | 15.6 | 16.7 |
| (10) FS | 12.8 | 15.9 | 12.5 | 12.2 | 16.1 | 17.0 |

(1) [NEAT] Developing and managing the a National English test that assesses all 4 skills
(2) [AdOne] Adding one more instruction hour per week and supplementing materials accordingly (Elementary School);
(3) [SML] Increasing classes that students move to according to their levels (Secondary School);
(4) [ITT/TEE] Increasing intensive teacher training/ Certifying TEE
(5) [ECT] Placing the English conversation teachers
(6) [NS] Placing the NS teachers
(7) [EECfES] Providing English exploration classrooms (Elementary School)
(8) [EoCfSS] Providing English only classrooms (Secondary schools)
(9) [EBS] Providing EBS (English Broadcasting Service) classes
(10) [FS] Managing focus-schools for English education

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study aimed to examine secondary teachers’ perceptions of English education policies in Korea. Since the policies were all seemingly equally important at first glance, teachers were asked to compare the policies and select what they thought was the most cost-efficient policy 1) to improve classroom teaching practice at school and 2) to improve students’ English communication ability. Table 6 shows the summary of the policies that the teachers selected most highly. The percent is based on the number of teachers who selected a particular policy as the most cost efficient policy to achieve the policy goal.

TABLE 6.
The policies that teachers selected as the most cost-efficient policy to achieve the policy goal (%)

| Top 3 cost-efficient policies | Top 3 cost-efficient policies |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| to improve English classes at school | to improve students’ English communication ability |
| 2010 | 2016 | 2010 | 2016 |
| Middle school teachers | | | |
| (6) 16.2% | (6) 39.4% | (6) 20.4% | (6) 53.7% |
| (3) 15.1% | (3) 14.2% | (8) 13.9% | (4) 9.6% |
| (8) 14.7% | (4) 13.8% | (3) 12.4% | (3) 9.2% |
| High school teachers | | | |
| (10) 15.2% | (6) 35.6% | (10) 16% | (6) 43.2% |
| (6) 14.4% | (1) 14.4% | (6) 14.3% | (1) 11.7% |
| (8) 12.8% | (3)/(4) 12.5 | (8) 12.3% | (2) 11.0% |
| Combined | | | |
| (6) 15.4% | (6) 37.3% | (6) 17.6% | (6) 47.9% |
| (8) 14.8% | (3) 13.1% | (8) 13.1% | (1) 10.0% |
| (3) 12.3% | (1) 12.0% | (10) 12.9% | (4) 9.1% |
Placing NS teachers has been regarded as the most prioritized policy by the secondary teachers of English in Daegu, Korea. The result has shown that both middle and high school teachers in 2010 and in 2016 selected (6) Placing the NS teachers highly and the selection rate of the policy (6) was dramatically increased in 2016. The reason is because native speaker teachers performed as an authentic language resource with good English communication skills and different cultural backgrounds, resulting in helping the teachers make the activities, materials, and evaluation authentic. They also made classroom activities interesting and meaningful by providing authentic real life input, as well as more motivation and opportunities for students. Due to the English education policies emphasizing communication ability, the teachers in 2016 were able to focus more on utilizing the Native speaker teachers as intended for classes and for other activities such as writing English books, English broadcasting, English festivals, English newspapers, and English tests. In 2010, however, the beginning stages of placing the native speaker teachers, they were having burdensome chores for the settlement of NS teachers than actually utilizing them for classes. Attention needs to be paid to the fact that the positive perception towards the NS teachers by the Korean teachers has been formulated through the increase of their roles in English education in Korea with the development of English education policies focusing on communicative English teaching. Another explanation would be that teachers are accustomed to having native speaker teachers and then not having them in 2016 due to budget cuts may make them feel more needed. Or teachers may realize that they are not as good as they expected at managing English classes in English without the native English teachers.

It needs to be addressed that attitudes towards the NS teachers can be different according to the context of English education. In the past three years, the local offices of education have suffered from financial constraints, leading to the reduction of the number of the NS teachers at schools. The results differ based on location. The NS teachers from Daegu have been deployed in all the elementary and middle schools teaching English one hour a week to students of each grade. On the other hand, those in Seoul have been working only in elementary schools. This leads to the different responses from the teachers. Some of the teachers from Seoul had difficulty in understanding the high importance of the NS teachers from Daegu as ‘We don’t have the NS teachers in middle schools.’ Another teacher from Seoul felt unhappy ‘to know that the influence of the NS teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning at school and communicative language teaching is so high.’ She argued that ‘it is because the psychological dependence on the NS teachers rather than the substantial contribution to English education. We have made our efforts to improve our competence such as making use of the English only classrooms’. This implies that the NS teacher policy needs to reflect on such factors as the competence of the teaching practice by the Korean teachers, the current situation of the exposure of English to students and teachers, and the direction of the English education policy.

The second issue related to English education policies is that the middle school teachers expected (3) Increasing classes that students move to according to their levels (Secondary School) to have a positive influence on the improvement of the teaching and learning at school and communicative ability. They also rated it cost-efficient in 2016. They perceived it as one of the most cost-efficient policies in that it allowed students to move to the class appropriate for their level, resulting in students being more interested in class activities and more satisfied with the feeling of achievement. More importantly the policy generates smaller sized classes and provides better teaching and learning opportunities for teachers and students with more frequent class interaction. Even though this policy yields some difficulties such as budget and employing lecturers to manage level-specific classes, teachers seem to perceive that this policy supports dealing with a wide gap in terms of English opportunities and ability. The written interviews have shown that there is no difference regarding the policy among teachers from Daegu and Seoul as well as those from middle and high schools. Despite the strengths, such issues including possible conflict with cooperative learning and its actual effect may be present. Teachers pointed out that ‘although it is claimed that the policy be needed for the effective teaching and learning, there is an argument that the extension of the policy is not consistent with the demand on the cooperative learning.’ Moreover, some argued that ‘the policy is more for teachers than students in that they cannot provide
level-differentiated tests based on the level-differentiated teaching and learning.’ This can cause suspicion in terms of the impact on students’ achievement.

The third issue is the change in the perception of the high school teachers about English education policies and the importance of the National level English test. In 2010, (8) Providing English only classroom (Secondary schools) and (10) Managing focus-schools for English education were selected by high school teachers as two of the three most cost-efficient policies. However, in 2016, high school teachers selected (1) Developing and managing a national level English Test that assesses all four skills as the most effective policy. This means that the high school teachers’ expectation of and evaluation of the English education policies changed, and they put more emphasis on assessment than physical conditions. A teacher from Daegu indicated that ‘teachers were more interested in teaching practice than physical situations.’ Particularly the increase of importance by the high school teachers in the development of the National level English test may be based on the abolition of the development of the NEAT and the following introduction of the criterion-referenced assessment of English in the university entrance examination. It can be understood in line with the rising concern about English education at school that “you can see the phenomenon of going back to the past and decreasing interest in English education” (Lee, 2016).

Finally, it has been found that the secondary teachers were concerned about the effect of the English education policies on increasing private education. Particular concern has been paid to (1) Developing and managing the National English test that assesses all four skills and (2) Adding one more instruction hour per week and supplementing materials accordingly (Elementary School). However, the survey conducted by the KMOE and the National Statistical Office has indicated that the average rise of private education expenditure for English between 2010 and 2015 is 2.6 percent for middle school and 2.1 percent for high school respectively. The average rise of consumer price index in the same period is 2.1 percent. This means that the effect of the English education policies on increasing private education costs has not been very serious.

Based on the results of looking at English language policies in the Korean EFL context, we can make some conclusions. Firstly, in the inception stage, all policies seem equally important. After some practice, however, things are more visible and the evaluation of the policies is clearer because of the realization of the relative importance and the priority. As our study indicates, the policy of Placing native speakers was evaluated more highly after they were removed from classes and after all the initial settlement issues disappeared. Especially when teachers are involved in evaluating the policies, some interfering factors that concern teachers such as increasing duties or chores should be considered. In this sense, providing needed policies all at once seems inefficient. Some policies such as teaching English in English that can change the whole direction of teaching at school should be attempted before others. For example, the teaching English in English policy should be applied with existing resources first so that it is possible to find deficiencies and make improvements. It would be more efficient adding other policies that are needed after realizing the strength and weaknesses of having a certain policy in place.

Secondly, when evaluating policies, we need to avoid attempting to evaluate the policy right after the implementation or within a short time after because people’s realization of the importance or what is needed or prioritized take some time to develop. A thorough plan including longitudinal or follow up studies is needed in the creation of future policies (Jeon, 2009).

Finally, when the policy is being implemented differently from what its purpose at the surface level, the performance of the policy can be difficult to evaluate. The policy evaluator needs to look at the result of the policy within the process of implementation. The ending result is often not interpretable because of the difference between the policy at the surface level and the implementation of it. The evaluation model of English education policy suggested Jeon and Paek (2009) can be useful in conceptualizing policy evaluation.
The Authors

Jihyeon Jeon is professor in the Dept. of International Office Administration, Ewha Woman’s University, Seoul, Korea. Her current research interest covers English language policies and communication education for global context. She has managed numerous government research projects in Korea and has done several plenary/featured talks at conferences such as Asia TEFL, LIA, Pan-Pacific Business Communication, and KoTESOL Conference. Her recent research includes Issues of Business Communication in Korea (2012); Participants’ perceptions on a Multi-goal Oriented English Language Education Policy: A Case of Teach and Learn in Korea Program (2015); Cram schools and English language education in East Asian contexts (Forthcoming, The TESOL encyclopedia of ELT); and Language education policies in South Korea (Forthcoming). She is currently the vice president of Korea ESP. She also worked as the managing editor of the Journal of Asia TEFL and is currently serving as the Secretary General for Asia TEFL.

Email: dearjeon@ewha.ac.kr

Hyoshin Lee is an assistant professor in the Dept. of English Language, Konkuk University Glocal Campus, Chungju, Korea. Before moving to the university, she taught English at state secondary schools for about 20 years. She has worked on teacher/trainer training since she received her doctorate degree in teacher development in 2003 from The University of Manchester, UK. She has been involved in a wide range of teacher education programmes. Her major interests include continuous professional development, curriculum alignment and ESP.

Email: hslee2012@kku.ac.kr

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