

Problem/Need Statement

A needs analysis was conducted of the Freshman English course at Kyungpook National University in South Korea. Based on personal communication with other instructors in the program as well as students currently enrolled in the program, several gaps were found in the instruction that can be filled through supplements to the program. The gaps identified included a need to improve speaking and listening skills as well as a need for more exposure and understanding of multiculturalism and diversity within South Korea.

The environment in which these needs have been identified exists in the Foreign Language Building of the Kyungpook National University campus in Daegu, South Korea. The credited course is required of all students in the university and is divided into 2 semesters. The courses, Freshman English 1 and 2, are comprehensive and completed in sequence. There are 25 instructors in the program. All are native English speakers from the United States, Canada, Ireland, England, Australia, South Africa or New Zealand. Each instructor teaches 7 to 9 separate classes, each with an average of 20 students. All classes are taught on the 4th floor of the Foreign Language Building. There are 20 classrooms on this floor, of which only 4 currently have computers. These 4 computers have internet access. All classrooms have desks for the students, a podium and chair for the instructor and a large whiteboard. The current program curriculum consists of a textbook developed by the program director, Dr. Andrew Finch and several assessment packages developed by a committee comprised of current instructors. The current instruction method is heavily student centered, promotes student autonomy and responsibility and focuses on building basic communication skills, paragraph writing. The theme in the current semester is building job skills such as resume writing and job interview practice.

Based on interviews with several current instructors of the program, there is a clear need to supplement the program in order to improve and assess listening skills. "There isn't an instructive listening component present in the current course design," Dr. Rolf Naidoo. Another instructor, Dr. Deiter Knowles stated that he feels the program is lacking in sufficient instruction in order to help students improve listening, pronunciation and vocabulary.

As an instructor in the program, the author has access to the students of the program. The author conducted an informal survey asking each student enrolled in his class for the second semester of the program to identify their goals and needs for this course. An overwhelming majority identified their speaking ability as the area they feel most lacking in and want to improve. Many other students expressed an interest in learning more about other cultures. "I want to learn about cultural differences. I want my teacher to share stories about his culture," stated Dong Hyung Lee, a sophomore enrolled in the program. This seems to contrast what current media is saying about South Korea's view of multiculturalism.

The amount of multicultural individuals and families presently in South Korea is on the rise. South Korea is a largely homogenous culture with the majority of the population being of Korean decent. This increase in diversity is creating a new need for an understanding of and appreciation for multiculturalism in the country. There seems to currently be a lack of this as referenced by an article published in The Korea Herald in July 2014: "Koreans Not Ready for Multiculturalism" by Claire Lee. According to the article, a study conducted by the Asian Institute for Policy Studies found that biracial babies made up only 4.7% of newborns in South Korea in 2012. Although a small number, this is a notable increase from 2.9% in 2008. This homogeneity often leads to stereotypes, other negative generalizations and even racism towards

cultures that are different from the dominant one. These negative opinions of difference are typically aimed towards immigrants and cultures from surrounding Asian countries. "According to the report released in April, 65.9 percent of Koreans had a positive perception on immigrants from the U.S. while only 45.7 thought positively of immigrants from Nigeria. Almost 60 percent of Koreans viewed immigrants from Japan and China negatively, according to the report" (Lee, 2014).

Instructors in the program agree that helping the students in the program develop a broader understanding of appreciation of diversity and respect for other cultures is important. "In my class, I focus on culture because my philosophy is you can't separate language and culture," Dr. Deiter Knowles. Many other instructors currently incorporate their own ideas for teaching related to culture. "I like to include cultural differences in things like body language, gestures and self introductions and relate them to professional and work situations," Kirsty Clausen. Another instructor, Forrest Smith added that he feels teaching about culture is inherent in teaching English. Yet none the instructors interviewed feel they have been able to adequately incorporate issues like gender inequality, sexual orientation or racism into the current curriculum. "These types of issues don't really fit into things like resume writing and interview skills," Tashia Mante.

Through conversations with students it is clear that there is a desire to explore more cultural issues while studying English. The author currently incorporates various kinds of popular music into the curriculum when it can be applied to the topic, theme or learning objective. It has been received positively by the students and many have requested more music and other media in the classroom. Young Ho Kim, a freshman student enrolled in Freshman English 2,

stated, "I really love music and it makes the class more fun and interesting." Another student, Sung Yong Park mentioned that he enjoys movies in English because he can see things that are different from his culture.

This interest in music and other media presents an interesting opportunity to supplement both the need for more listening and speaking practice as well as the need to develop a greater understanding and respect for multiculturalism and diversity. Due to the nature of the curriculum, addressing issues related to multiculturalism and diversity is often difficult within the current program. Additionally, time constraints and requirements to follow curriculum and achieve certain objectives make it difficult to supplement current instruction time to allow for more listening and speaking practice. The possibility of additional training for instructors on how to integrate this type of information within their current practice was discussed. However, again due mainly to time constraints, it was not received well. Instructors stated that with regular teaching hours, committee responsibilities, staff meetings and the training already in place it would not be reasonable to implement additional training. The development of an optional supplement was deemed the most beneficial and feasible solution to fill the instructional gap.

The proposed instructional design is a workshop held once a week to provide supplemental instruction to address these needs. The instruction will focus on the use of music and other media to: improve listening skills; provide opportunities for speaking practice and thereby improve pronunciation and vocabulary usage; and address and discuss issues related to multiculturalism and diversity in order to promote greater respect and understanding among the students and the surrounding community. This program is supported by current teaching staff and students enrolled in the Kyungpook National University Freshman English program.

References

Lee, C. (2014, July 30). Koreans not ready for multiculturalism. *The Korean Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140730000857>

Current Kyungpook National University Instructors Interviewed:

Clausen, Kirsty

Knowles, Dr. Deiter

Mante, Tashia

Naidoo, Dr. Rolf

Smith, Forrest

Current Kyungpook National University Students Interviewed:

Kim, Young Ho

Lee, Dong Hyung

Park, Sung Yong