

Elementary English Education in Korea

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1. Background of Elementary English Education

On 24 February 1995, the 'Globalization Steering Committee' prepared education requirements for the globalization era and submitted a series of proposals to the President of Korea. The elementary school English program was one of the strategies to strengthen foreign language education in Korea.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) then prepared the Sixth National Curriculum which included English as an elementary school subject in elementary school on 15 March 95 and after public hearings and seminars, proclaimed the Sixth Curriculum on the 1 Nov. 95.

The curriculum was implemented for the third grade in 1997. It was expanded to the fourth grade in 1998 the fifth grade in 1999. Finally the elementary English education program was fully expanded from the third grade through the sixth grade in the year 2000.

2. Seventh National Basic Curriculum

The Seventh National Basic Curriculum is designed to integrate the subjects from grades 1 to 10.

1) Time Allotment Standards

		Elementary School						Middle			High		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
S U	Korean Language	Korean 210 238		238	204	204	204	170	136	136	136	Elec- tive	
	Moral Education	Mathematics 20 136		34	34	34	34	68	68	34	34		

B J E C T A R E A S	Social Studies	Disciplined Life	102	102	102	102	102	102	136	170	Cour- Ses
		60 68									
	Mathematics	Intelligent Life	136	136	136	136	136	136	102	136	
		90 102									
	Science	Pleasant Life	102	102	102	102	102	136	136	102	
		180 204									
	Practical Arts	We are the first graders	.	.	68	68	68	102	102	102	
		80 .									
	Physical Education		102	102	102	102	102	102	68	68	
	Music		68	68	68	68	34	34	68	34	
Fine Arts		68	68	68	68	34	34	68	34		
Foreign Languages(Eng.)		34	34	68	68	102	102	136	136		
Optional Activities	60	68	68	68	68	136	136	136	204		
Extracurricular	30	34	34	68	68	68	68	68	68	8units	
Grand Total	830	850	986	986	1088	1088	1156	1156	1156	1224	144units

* The above table shows the minimum number of total annual instruction hours by subject and grades 1 through 10 and which are devoted to the national basic education during the 34-week school-year.

3. Elementary English Curriculum

1) Goals

The main objective of elementary school English is to enable students to understand and express basic English used in daily life. However the content and teaching strategies are

significantly different from that of the secondary school. The secondary objective is to familiarize students with English and to maintain their interest in English. The students must have confidence and be willing to study it continuously.

2) Language Contents

Since the students in elementary school are fairly young and English is being taught for the first time as a regular subject, the contents focus on communicative language skills, especially conversations spoken during interesting activities. Written language is gradually introduced.

The total vocabulary is about 500 words for the four-year elementary English course. The third and fourth grades each introduce 80 to 120 new words. Then 90 to 130 new words are added in each the fifth and the sixth grades. Additionally, sentences are limited to seven words in the third and fourth grades and nine words in the fifth and sixth grades.

3) Elementary School English Contents

	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade	6th grade
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Listen and point to the objects *Respond to instructions *Understand simple daily expressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Listen and understand descriptions of people and objects *Understand simple dialogues *Respond to instructions *Understand place and time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Perform spoken tasks *Understand situations *Listen and understand past events *Understand telephone dialogues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Understand the intention of the speaker *Talk about the future *Ask simple questions and answer *Compare objects *Understand telephone Eng.
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Express greetings, thanks, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Use simple dialogues *Describe or use questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Say simple dialogues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Give own opinion

	apologies *Name simple items *Repeat songs & chants	and answers about people and objects *Give simple commands *Role play *Sing and Chant	*Talk about daily life *Requests and give orders *Telephone use	*Listen and say the topic *Ask and answer about the past and future
Reading		*Alphabet recognition *Repeat the reading of words	*Read and understand simple words *Listen and find the words	*Understand the meaning of words & phrases *Read properly *Understand simple sentences
Writing			*Copy the Alphabet *Copy words *Match pictures and words	*Write simple words, phrases, and sentences *Write proper sentence punctuation

4. Textbook

The elementary school subjects use one nationally approved textbook. However for English , each school can choose from 16 different textbooks. The adopted textbook includes a videotape for teachers and audio tapes for students. Most of the books consists of 16 lessons and each lesson takes up four class hours.

In 2001, under the Seventh National Basic Curriculum, each elementary school will use the same nationally approved English textbook. Also the video tapes will be converted to the CD-ROM format to conform to technological developments.

5. Teachers

Most of the elementary school English teachers did not major in English. As the concerns of society increased, the government placed more emphasis on English teacher training. The current basic course of English training consists of 120 hours but many teachers have gone through another 120 hours of advanced training. Some teachers who have an excellent language ability were selected to attend overseas training. By 1999, statistically 126% of the required English teachers had finished the training.

Number of Classrooms (3 rd to 6 th grade)	Completed Basic Course (120 hours)	Completed Advanced Course (120 hours)	English majors or above 600 in TOEFL score	Overseas training (Over six months.)	Total number of trained teachers
71,445	43,098	34,258	1,962	496	79,814

The training is continuously emphasized. In the year 2000, there will be 10,292 teachers receiving the basic course and 7,532 teachers will get the advanced course.

Meanwhile, the government continues to hire secondary school English teachers to teach only English in the elementary schools. The number of these licensed English teachers will increase annually.

6. Elementary English Education (Classes)

1) Lesson Format

	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade	6th grade
1st hour	Look & Listen Listen & Repeat Let's play	Look & Listen Listen & Repeat Listen & Do	Look & Listen Listen & Repeat Listen & Do Activity	Look & Listen Listen & Do Activity
2nd hour	Look & Listen Listen & Repeat	Look & Listen Listen & Repeat	Look & Speak Sing or Chant	Look & Speak Sing or Chant

	Let's Chant Let's play	Let's Chant Listen & Do	Let's Play	Let's Play
3rd hour	Look & Listen Let's Sing Let's play	Look & Listen Let's Sing Let's Read Let's play	Read Write Let's Play	Read Write Let's Play
4th hour	Role Play Review	Role Play Review	Role Play Review	Task Role Play Review

2) Class Procedures

- Greeting - Song, Ask & answer (includes weather, dates)
- Review - Q & A
- Introduction - Repeat, Use flash cards, VCR, pattern practice, TPR, Listen & Act
- Practice, Development - Songs, Chants, Activities, Games
- Closing -

3) Evaluation

The student evaluation is based upon attitude, active participation, and willingness to respond. The "no written test" policy minimizes the students' anxiety and allows them to focus more on communication. The students are assessed through actual class observation by the teacher.

7. Conclusion

Based upon the student responses and experience of the teachers from the past three years, most educators feel the communication-based elementary school English program is successful. As teachers receive modern teaching methodologies the program will continue to improve.

Upon implementation of the Seventh National Basic Curriculum, the Korean English program will be standardized from the third to tenth grades. This innovation of communication-based standardization will result in a shift from the traditional English teaching methods. Students in the current elementary school English program will continue through middle and high school with the communicative way of learning English. The end result will be Korean students who can communicate in English. In the final analysis the elementary English program will be judged as the catalyst-creating turning point away from the way English has been taught in Korea since 1945.