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Pedagogical Dissonance in High School English Classes in South Korea

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Research Questions

- Is the image of English education in South Korea valid?
- How does the university entrance examination affect the classroom?
- How does classroom culture and school culture affect methodology and teaching?
- What are the implications of research for English education in Japan?



Schools Visited in 2001

- September 7: Chungdong High School, Kangnam-ku, Seoul
- September 10: Shinil High School, Tobong-ku, Seoul
- September 13: Korean Minjok Leadership Academy, near Wonju, Kangwon Province
- September 14: Yangjong High School, Kangso-ku, Seoul
- September 21: Pusan Tong Girls' High School



Choice of Schools

- Former students and acquaintances
- Traditional and experimental approaches to teaching English (Korean Minjok Leadership Academy)
- Limitations: Lack of regional, public-private, urban-rural, gender balance.



Korean Minjok Leadership Academy (民族史觀高等学校)

- Founded in 1996 (Confucian?)
- Elite private boarding school for boys and girls. Designated as an "autonomous private school" (自立形私立学校) in 2001.
- 214 students in 2001
- Tries for a 100% English immersion ("EOP" = English Only Policy); mixed Korean and foreign staff; mixed Korean and United States curriculum
- Website: <http://ns.minjok.hs.k>

Pedestals Reserved for Future Nobel Prize Winners





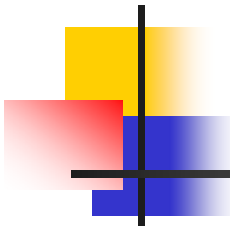
Video Clips

- The setting and facilities
- 10th grade reading class for SAT preparation



Comments

- "EOP" (English Only Policy) appears to be a success, though English classes themselves are somewhat traditional.
- Effective use of native-speaker teachers as equal, full-time members of staff.
- Enduring strength of Confucian ethos in education in Korea.
- American-style classrooms (teachers have personal classroom and students move)
- Unusual (crazy?) school and governance problems.



Chungdong High School (中東高等学校)

- Founded in 1906 (non-religious)
- Private school for boys
- 1,563 students in 2002
- English as a subject in the Korean curriculum; part-time native speaker teachers irregularly
- Website:
<http://www.chungdong.or.kr/high/index.htm>




Video Clips

- The setting and facilities



Comments

- The "atmosphere" made it difficult to see a class here.
- Facilities reflect funding from Samsung company
- Attempting to create an urban elite school, but limited by regulations.



Shinil High School (信一高等学校)

- Founded in 1959 (Christian)
- Private school for boys
- 1,565 students in 2002
- English as a subject in the Korean curriculum; part-time native speaker teachers irregularly
- Website: <http://www.shinil.hs.kr/shinil.htm>



Video Clips

- The setting
- Traditional 12th grade class
- Experimental 10th grade communicative class ([1](#)) ([2](#)) ([3](#)) ([4](#))



Comments

- Traditional classes lack intensity, but few discipline problems.
- Experimental communicative classes are part of preparation for the adoption of 7th curriculum at high school level in 2003.
- Students are not used to pair work and seem to prefer whole-class group activities.
- Issue of non-native teachers in communicative methodology



Yangjong High School (養正高等学校)

- Founded in 1905 (non-religious)
- Private school for boys
- 1,712 students in 2000
- English as a subject in the Korean curriculum; part-time native speaker teachers irregularly
- Website:
<http://yangchung.cschool.net/main.htm>



Video Clips

- The setting and facilities
- 12th grade class



Comments

- Lack of intensity in classes, but few discipline problems
- School governance problems (windows, food service)
- Pride in history



Pusan Tong Girls' High School (釜山東女子高等学校)

- Founded in 1967
- Public school for girls
- English as a subject in the Korean curriculum; irregular part-time native speaker teachers
- Website: <http://www.bdong-g.hs.kr/>



Video Clips

- 10th grade class
- Teacher explanation in English (same class)



Comments

- Appeared to be a demonstration class
- Example of non-native speaker use of English in the classroom
- Lesson dependent on textbook contents
- Class appeared focused and disciplined
- Question of gap between public and private schools in Korea



Conclusions 1

- Q: Is the image of English education in South Korea valid?
- A: Similar problems: Lack of intensity and concentration; English education as ceremony and examination preparation.
- Q: How does the university entrance examination affect the classroom?
- A: Entrance examination (CSAT) dominates third-year teaching, particularly in the fall semester.



Conclusions 2

- Q: How does classroom culture and school culture affect methodology and teaching?
- A: Teacher-fronted activities in Korean remain the norm; students not used to pair work. Confucian values influence teacher and student expectations of each other, but this may work in favor of teaching English through English.



Implications for Japan 1

- Q: What are the implications of this research for English education in Japan?
- A1: Adopting a listening section on the University Center Examination as planned in 2006 will have a direct impact on the classroom.
- A2: Improving the proficiency of Japanese teachers so that they may be more confident of teaching English through English may be more effective than increasing the number of ALTs.



Implications for Japan 2

- A3: Methods, such as pair work, that are favored in the English-speaking world may not work well in Japanese schools
- A4: Role of an ethos in education. Discipline problems appear to be fewer and lack of motivation and boredom confines itself mainly to sleeping or lack of concentration in class