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Europass and the CEFR: Implications for Language Teaching in Korea

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Europass was established in 2005 by the European Parliament and the Council of Europe as a single framework for language qualifications and competences, helping citizens to gain accreditation throughout the European Community. In addition, the 1996 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) provides a common basis for language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, examination, and textbooks in Europe. This framework describes the required knowledge and skills, the cultural context, and the levels of proficiency that learners should achieve. In combination, Europass and the CEFR provide employers and educational institutes with internationally recognized standards. This paper proposes that current trends such as globalization and international mobility require a similar approach to accreditation in Asia. As jobs and workers become independent of national boundaries and restrictions, it becomes necessary to educate students as multilingual world citizens, using standards that are accepted around the world. It is suggested, therefore, that assessment models such as Europass and the CEFR, along with successful language teaching models in Europe and Canada, present opportunities of adaptation for the Korean education system. Finally, rigorous teacher training to internationally recognized levels is recommended, if Korea is to produce a workforce of highly-skilled, plurilingual world citizens.

[CEFR/Europass/accreditation/testing standards/assessment models]

I. INTRODUCTION

When investigating ways of improving foreign language education in the United States, Pufahl, Rhodes, and Christian (2001) recently asked 22 elementary and secondary educators in 19 countries around the world the question "What do you think are three of the most successful aspects of foreign language education in your country?" (p. 1).

Responses identified a number of factors, including: i) an early start; ii) a well-articulated framework; iii) rigorous teacher education; iv) comprehensive use of technology; v) effective teaching strategies; vi) strong policy; vii) assessment; and viii) maintenance of heritage, regional, and indigenous languages. These are all important considerations in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and it is significant that educational reform in these areas is either under way or under consideration in Korea (Kim, 2008; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2009, pp. 3, 8-9), in answer to "the general public's strong desires for the innovation of English Language Teaching (ELT) paradigms in Korea" (Lee, 2007, p. 42). The seventh of the areas identified above (assessment), has been the particular focus of reform for some time (Kwon, 1999, 2007), as the weaknesses of traditional methods of language assessment have been criticized and performance assessment has received more emphasis and approval as a means of evaluating and promoting communicative competence in the target language (Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation, 2008; Joo, 2008). Such authentic use of English, it is argued, is needed for Korea to survive and prosper in the global marketplace of the 21st century (Kwon, 2000, p. 85).

In view of this climate of educational reform, this paper suggests that educators and policy-makers in Korea might benefit from investigating evaluation models and practices in the European Community (EC). The Europass project (European Communities, 2009) and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001a) provide employers and job-seekers with rigorous standards, methods and rubrics for language assessment that are accepted in all the 27 states of the EC. This not only ensures mobility of workers across national boundaries in Europe, but also allows them to present their qualifications, work experience, and un-certified vocational experience in a widely accepted, transparent format. Such an approach to language proficiency evaluation, it is proposed, might be adapted in a manner appropriate to the educational environment and culture in Korea, providing universal accreditation and assurance of exam standards for high school, university and college graduates. If a 'Koreapass' or even an 'Asiapass,' were developed and introduced, it could offer the benefits of its European predecessor for Korean employers and employees, by providing universal accreditation for language skills and qualifications and maximizing the multilingual opportunities offered by globalization and regionalization. Such an internationally accredited method of valuation and documentation could also be used for vetting the linguistic proficiency of visitors wishing to work in Korea, as well as facilitating accreditation of Korean citizens working abroad.

II. THE SITUATION

An examination of successful models of language teaching around the world reveals a number of educational policies and teaching approaches which might be adapted to the current situation in Korea. The immersion system in Canada is a case in point, where 375,000 graduates are now bilingual, and where it has been found that "immersion programs are suitable for children with diverse learning and language characteristics provided they are members of a majority language group" (Genesee, 1988, p. 179). It is interesting to note that immersion schooling in Canada was parent-initiated and began, in 1965, from very small beginnings. It is also significant that (as in Korea) availability of bilingual teachers was a big problem at the start.

Another successful model can be seen in Finland (a country that has similar demographics to Korea), where high teacher standards and a focus on professional development have transformed the country. As Nichols and Berliner (2005) point out:

> Finland, the highest achieving country in the world in reading, mathematics and science, have [sic] no standardized tests that resemble ours whatsoever, though they use teacher made tests in their classroom and school accountability system. Their system uses high standards for allowing teachers into the profession, awards high pay and bestows high status to those that enter teaching, provides rigorous and extensive professional development for the teachers, and depends on trusting relationships to improve academic achievement (Nichols & Berliner, 2005, pp. 165-166).

Education has long been recognized as an effective means of self-improvement. Malcolm X, for example, saw education as capable of liberating African Americans from their social problems: "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today" (Goodreads, 2009). The ex-Prime Minister of the UK, Tony Blair, also put education high on his list of priorities for reform: "Our economic success and our social cohesion depend on it [education]" (Blair, 1996b). He further emphasized education in his speech at the 1996 Labour[1] Party conference, stating that his three top priorities on coming to office were "education, education and education" (Blair, 1996a).

The Korean passion for education "is revealed in the college admission process, which is characterized by intense competition" (Choi, 2006, p. 11), since it is seen as the primary means to social advancement. As Choi points out, however, this zeal to send their children

[1] Spellings of organizational titles and pronouns in this paper adhere to the original versions.

to the 'best' universities is often not matched by the 'general education' offered by secondary schools, which are perceived by many parents as inadequate.

> The consumers of education in Korea are not only dissatisfied with school education; they have lost all trust toward the schools as a whole. Even the school teachers and government authorities seem to think that school education is failing. Korea's school educational system is in a dire state and is a serious issue of great concern for many (Choi, 2006, p. 11).

Despite the reputation for excellence of Koreans studying abroad, or Korean students' high ranking on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2008), many commentators point to an over-emphasis on memory-based learning in secondary schools, while high school students consistently describe the 'exam hell' (Lee & Larson, 2000) that they must endure prior to taking the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). Furthermore, a recent report (Hyun, 2009) states that "Koreans came second bottom ovearall [sic] in the General Training Module (GTM) for the International English Language Test System (IELTS), … securing the rank of 39th among the 40 nations that participated in the test", even though they spend great amounts of time and energy in learning English, in order to enter prestigious universities in Korea.

As employers and employees increasingly cross national boundaries, however, the kudos of 'a good Korean university' no longer holds sway for Koreans wanting to enter the international arena. Instead, there is a need for internationally recognized qualifications and accreditation of skills and experience. Because of this, many students travel to the USA and elsewhere to obtain diplomas from world-famous universities. Others study for tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and the IELTS, since these are accepted by employers and institutions worldwide. Furthermore, many universities in Korea are teaming up with institutions in the USA and the UK to provide western-style teaching (and diplomas) inside Korea (Graddol, 2007, p. 79), English-medium instruction in credit courses in Korean universities is being actively encouraged, and prestigious foreign universities are being invited to open in the Incheon Free Economic Zone ("U.S. Universities to Open Campus in Incheon Free Zone," 2009).

In addition to these trends, it appears that the status of English as Lingua Franca (ELF) is not as firmly founded as it might have seemed. Davis (2004) estimates that English will account for less than 30% of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2010, "and is likely to account for less in the future. Neglecting other languages means ignoring quite significant potential markets." (Davis, 2004, cited in Graddol, 2007, p. 62). In view of the continuing rise of Mandarin (estimated to be 23% of the world GDP by 2010), along with

the fact that Korea "now trades more with China than with the USA" (Graddol, 2007, p. 63) and the apparent long-term trend suggesting that Mandarin will continue to become more and more important, it seems likely that many parents will demand education in Mandarin for their children, rather than (or in addition to) English, in which case the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK, 2005), might well come to rival the TOEFL or the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) in terms of popularity.

In proposing Europass and the CEFR as universally accredited models of language proficiency, this paper attempts to make the additional point that a common assessment system in Asia need not be restricted to one or two languages. Indeed, the Europass evaluation instruments can be downloaded in 26 languages. In view of the initial success of this European venture (Davidson & Fulcher, 2007), it seems reasonable to suggest that the 21 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) member countries could consider designing a multi-lingual 'APECpass,' or perhaps an 'Asia-Pacificpass'. This could be a step towards recognizing and regulating the economic mobility that is already taking place in the region and providing universal accreditation for its citizens.

III. EUROPASS

An Internet search for 'Europass' will probably come upon two major sites: one for the Eurail Pass (which used to be called 'Europass') and the other for the European Council's Europass. The existence of these two alternatives is not insignificant, since they share a common concept – easy access to Europe. On the one hand, the Eurail Pass is concerned with facilitating travel throughout Europe, and on the other hand, the Council of Europe Europass aims to make employment throughout its member states as simple and trouble-free as possible.

One of the biggest barriers preventing individuals from moving around Europe for study, training or work has been the lack of understanding of qualifications and skills across borders, and one of the key tools in removing the barriers to understanding has been Europass, which was established in 2005 by the European Parliament and the Council of Europe as a single framework for qualifications and competences. Recognized among the European Union (EU), European Free trade Association (EFTA), and European Economic Area (EEA) countries, Europass helps people to: i) make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe; and ii) move anywhere in Europe. Five constituent Europass documents (National Framework of Qualifications, 2007) act as a common link between jobseekers, employers, and educational and training centers by documenting academic and vocational qualifications, experience, and skills. They also help with the recognition of academic qualifications and highlight learning content covered by

the qualifications. Of these five, two (the Europass Curriculum Vitae and the Europass Language Passport) are filled in by the individual, and the three others (the Europass Certificate Supplement, the Europass Diploma Supplement and Europass Mobility) are filled in and issued by competent organizations. The five Europass documents are as follows:

1. The Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV) contains personal information in addition to details of any work-experience, education and training, personal skills and competences that the individual has. It can be filled in by the individual online, in any one of 26 languages, and the other Europass documents can be attached to it. Alternatively, a template can be downloaded in various different formats (PDF+Europass XML, Microsoft Word, Open Document, HTML, or Europass XML). CVs saved in PDF+XML or XML can be uploaded and edited online.
2. The Europass Language Passport was developed by the Council of Europe as part of the European Language Portfolio, which consists of the Language Passport, the Language Biography and the Dossier. The Language Passport is a self-assessment document that gives individuals the opportunity to present their language skills using the six standard CEFR European levels. This can also be filled in online or templates can be downloaded (and later edited online) in the same formats as available for the CV.
3. The Europass Mobility Document records periods of learning which the individual has undertaken in countries other than his/her own. It is monitored by partner organizations such as universities, schools, training centers and companies, both in the country of origin and the host country. The Europass Mobility document contains information regarding the individual, the purpose and duration of the mobility experience, the training and skills acquired abroad etc. It is issued by the organizations which organize the mobility experience, and is especially useful for: i) a work placement in a company abroad; ii) a student undertaking a term abroad as part of a higher education program; and iii) a worker undertaking a voluntary placement in an NGO.
4. The Europass Certificate Supplement records competences and qualifications gained through vocational training. It provides additional information regarding the award which is not available on the official certificate, such as the skills and competences acquired, the level of the certificate, and entry requirements and access opportunities to the next level of education etc. This makes it more easily understood, especially for employers and institutions outside the issuing country. The information on the Europass Certificate Supplement is supplied by the relevant awarding body which makes the award.
5. The Europass Diploma Supplement records educational achievements at higher education levels. It is issued to graduates of higher education institutions along with their degree or diploma, by the higher education institution which awards the diploma or degree.

The Diploma Supplement provides additional information regarding the award which is not available on the official certificate, such as the skills and competences acquired, the level of the qualification and the results gained, and entry requirements and access opportunities to the next level of education etc. This makes it more easily understood, especially for employers and institutions outside the issuing country (Adapted from the National Framework of Qualifications, 2007).

The Europass system functions through its 'National Europass Centres' in each member country. These provide the first point of contact for any person or organization interested in using or learning more about Europass, and exist to:

1. coordinate the management of Europass documents;
2. promote Europass and Europass documents;
3. ensure that information and guidance centers are well informed about Europass and the Europass documents;
4. ensure that all Europass documents are also available in paper versions;
5. act as a national partner in the European network of National Europass Centers (European Communities, 2009).

Citizens of the EU use Europass if they are: i) looking for a job in another European State; ii) intending to enter an education or training program; iii) employers, looking to recognize the qualifications and skills of jobseekers from other European states; iv) educational or training providers, seeking to establish existing learning and competences; and v) guidance practitioners (counselors), aiming to advise people about the most suitable learning paths and opportunities. In these cases, Europass:

1. clearly and effectively communicates qualifications and skills;
2. provides a systematic and inclusive electronic means of documenting commonly accredited qualifications and skills;
3. provides recognition for non-accredited learning and working experiences;
4. gives the opportunity to move across employment sectors and to study and work abroad, irrespective of background, qualifications, skills or experiences;
5. establishes and endorses strong links between education and training, and different sectors of the workforce, to make sure that qualifications and skills continue to be relevant and appreciated (European Communities, 2009).

IV. THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO (ELP)

In addition to the Europass, The European Language Portfolio (ELP) (Newby & European Centre for Modern Languages, 2007) has been instituted by the Council of Europe to enable those who are learning or have learned a language - whether in school or outside school - to record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences. The ELP project has two main aims: i) to motivate learners by acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language skills at all levels; and ii) to provide a record of the linguistic and cultural skills they have acquired (to be consulted, for example, when they are moving to a higher learning level or seeking employment at home or abroad) (Council of Europe, 2001b). The ELP contains a Language Passport, which its owner regularly updates. This passport is largely self-assessed, using common criteria (set by the CEFR) to describe language proficiencies, in addition to formal certificates. There are three parts to the Language Passport: i) the Passport; ii) the Language Biography; and iii) the Dossier.

Firstly, the Passport section provides an overview of the individual's proficiency in different languages. This proficiency is defined in terms of the CEFR and has a number of features:

1. It includes information on partial and specific competence.
2. It allows for self-assessment, teacher assessment and assessment by educational institutions and examinations boards.
3. It requires that information entered in the Passport states on what basis, when and by whom the assessment was carried out (Council of Europe, 2001b).

Secondly, the Language Biography helps the learner to plan, reflect upon progress and assess his or her learning. It is organized to promote the development of competencies in a number of languages, encouraging the learner to state what he/she can do in each language and to include information on linguistic and cultural experiences gained in and outside formal educational contexts. Thirdly, the Dossier offers the learner the opportunity to select materials to document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the Language Biography or Passport.

V. THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

1. What Is the CEFR?

The CEFR is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe. It was created by the Council of Europe as the main part of the project "Language Learning for European Citizenship" between 1989 and 1996. Its aim is to provide a method of assessing and teaching which applies to all languages in Europe and its six reference levels are becoming widely accepted as the standard for grading an individual's language proficiency (cf. Appendices A – C).

The CEFR provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop, as well as the cultural context in which language is set. The CEFR also defines levels of proficiency, which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. This provides the means for educational administrators, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, examining bodies, etc., to reflect on their current practice, so that they can meet the real needs of the learners for whom they are responsible. This common basis for objectives, content and methods, makes for transparency of course criteria, syllabi and qualifications, and thus promotes international cooperation in the field of modern languages. Furthermore, the objective criteria for describing language proficiency facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts, and thus facilitate European mobility.

2. Criteria for Descriptors

In describing levels of language proficiency, the CEFR facilitates comparisons between different systems of qualification, by means of its Descriptive Scheme and Common Reference Levels. These instruments provide a scale of reference levels in a common framework (the CEFR) which is context-free in its ability to generate generalizable results from specific contexts (e.g. local schools) and context-relevant in that the descriptors can be made appropriate for different contexts and the functions. The framework is also based on theories of language competence, though these are general, given the lack of proven results. Finally, the framework aims to be user-friendly and accessible to practitioners, helping them to consider the meaning of competence in their particular teaching context.

The CEFR criteria were developed using intuitive, qualitative and quantitative methods, in contrast to the purely intuitive ways in which scales of language proficiency are normally developed. The first step in this process was to develop the Common Reference

Levels and their descriptors, through a systematic analysis of existing proficiency scales. The results of this analysis were then edited, new descriptors were formulated, and the draft versions of the descriptors were discussed by experts. A variety of qualitative methods were next used to check that teachers could relate to the descriptive categories selected and that descriptors actually described the categories they were intended to describe. Finally, the best descriptors were scaled using quantitative methods. The accuracy of this scaling has since been checked in replication studies, notably by the Swiss National Science Research Council Project (Schneider & North, 2000) which developed the Common Reference Levels, the DIALANG project, (DIALANG, 2003; Alderson & Huhta, 2005), and the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) 'Can Do' project (ALTE, 2007). This latter project has developed and validated a large set of descriptors, which can also be related to the Common Reference Levels. Although the CEFR is quite young, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that the criteria are being at least partially fulfilled (Davidson & Fulcher, 2007).

3. The Common Reference Levels

In common with a general consensus on the number and nature of levels appropriate to the description of language learning achievement, the CEFR initially had six broad levels: i) Breakthrough; ii) Waystage; iii) Threshold; iv) Vantage; v) Effective Operational Proficiency; and vi) Mastery. These proved difficult to translate, however, and were seen to reflect the 'basic, intermediate, advanced' perspective too closely. A 'hypertext' branching principle was therefore proposed, starting from three broad levels: A, B and C. These were then divided into A1, A2 (Basic user), B1, B2, (Independent user), C1 and C2 (Proficient user). A description of the levels can be seen in Appendix A. An example of the Common Reference Levels: Global Scale can be seen in Appendix B.

Self-assessment is an important part of Europass, and the CEFR has a number of self-assessment scales, using (or compatible with) the DIALANG and ALTE systems. One of these can be seen in Appendix C. It is notable that all these scales and descriptors are set in the context of active use of the language and thus focus on performance.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR KOREA

As can be seen from the above overview of Europass and the CEFR, the five constituent documents provide a commonly agreed accreditation for skills and qualifications throughout Europe. This enables employees to seek out the best employment opportunities and employers to find the best job candidates, without being subject to the vagaries and

uncertainties of country-specific diploma accreditation. On a larger scale, the current trend towards globalization of industries and markets is resulting in a similar globalization of educational institutions and assessment standards, with job-candidates ready to relocate outside their homelands in order to put their skills and qualifications to their fullest use. Not only are service industries being 'outsourced', but highly qualified personnel are also moving across national boundaries to find the work that suits them best.

This situation has been gradually gaining momentum in Asia for some time. Korean engineers have been invited to build roads, bridges, and highly technological buildings in the Middle East and South Asia, medical doctors from India have set up practice in the UK, and service industries in the US have outsourced work to the Indian subcontinent and the Philippines. Qualified business professionals and academics with degrees from eminent universities in the US, the UK, and the rest of Europe, have also been travelling to Korea to share their skills and expertise.

The current state of affairs is volatile, however, with international demand for globally (and regionally) accredited professionals increasing all the time. As a result, a number of problems have arisen:

1. Korean students studying abroad need their Korean qualifications to be recognized by educational institutions in other countries.
2. Korean workers living abroad need their skills, experience and qualifications to be accepted and respected.
3. Korean employers need criteria for evaluating the skills, experience and qualifications of workers (including language instructors) coming to Korea from abroad.
4. Korean high school graduation and university graduates need their qualifications to be internationally accredited.

The first two of these considerations has led to a number of universities in Korea setting up partnerships with sister universities in the USA and importing professional academic staff and teaching methods. The third consideration refers to workers coming to Korea for employment, including the estimated 44,000 native-speaking teachers of English legally and illegally working in Korea (Kwon, 2007). The thirst of Korean parents for instructors who were born in an English-speaking country has led to an influx of such native speakers. However, the openness and size of this job-market has resulted in a significant number of unqualified instructors being employed. Not only have parents and language institute directors succumbed to the myth that students learn English more effectively by having a non-qualified native speaker as their teacher (Davies, 2003), but even the *English Program in Korea* (EPIK, 2006), which sends native speakers to Korean elementary and secondary

classrooms as teaching assistants, requires no teaching certification, and has only the following basic eligibility requirements:

1. Be a citizen of a country where English is the primary language.
2. Hold at least a Bachelor's degree from an accredited university.
3. Be mentally and physically healthy.
4. Have a good command of the English language.
5. Have the ability and willingness to adapt to Korean culture and living.
6. Be a maximum of 55 years of age (EPIK, 2006).

The fact that native speakers without teaching qualifications are officially invited to work in Korea as English teaching assistants, is symptomatic of misperceptions which must be addressed if Korea is to achieve internationally accredited status. In view of the importance of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), it is vital that the teaching of English be done by highly qualified professionals. Fluency in English is no longer just an advantage, but is now a requirement for an increasing number of professional positions around the world (Graddol, 2007). When preparing students for such an environment, unqualified native speakers are unable to provide the necessary professional language or cultural context and sensitivity. Instead, there is a need for highly qualified bilingual teachers. As in the Finnish model (in which all teachers study for five years for Masters degrees and spend the last two of those years in full-time teaching practice) or the Canadian immersion model, ELT teachers in Korea need to be fluent in both languages (Korean and English) as well as being expert professionals.

In this context, it is suggested here that a viable way of ensuring accreditation and verification of language instructors coming to Korea would be to: i) raise the job-requirements to include the completion of full-time language instruction courses; and ii) institute a 'Koreapass' requirement following the Europass model, to further ensure academic competence. This 'Koreapass' could use a common set of internationally agreed standards, and would offer world-wide recognition of skills, experience and qualifications across the five-document format of Europass. Outside of the language education field, and in view of the large number of people coming to Korea from other countries in Asia (China, Vietnam, Philippines, etc.), it might even be advisable to think in terms of an 'Asiapass,' perhaps using the same criteria as its European counterpart (Council of Europe, 2001a).

When considering how such recommendations might be implemented, the question of logistics arises. However, as Ward (ThinkExist, 2006) reminds us, "If you can imagine it, you can achieve it; if you can dream it, you can become it", and the number if recent educational reforms in Korea is evidence that there is a real desire to satisfy the need for international accreditation of language proficiency. If a consensus of policy makers and

assessment experts in Korea (or nations in Asia) were to decide to set about adapting the criteria of Europass and the CEFR to the particular needs and conditions of Korea (or Asia), then it would only be a matter of time before a working system would emerge. Such an endeavor would need to piloted on a small scale, so that problems could be identified and solved and it would require the full participation of educational and commercial institutions. Finally, a nation-wide campaign would be needed to help citizens become familiar with the concepts involved and a government department would need to be responsible for administration of the Koreapass documents and maintenance of the Koreapass website and online document service. However, following the example of its European counterpart, this would all appear to be achievable, while the benefits to Korea and its citizens, in terms of the advantages already outlined, would far outweigh the problems involved.

VII. CONCLUSION

Korea has been in the grips of an educational dilemma for some time. On the one hand, there is the need to produce a technologically educated workforce, which will take Korea forward in the 21st century and place it in the front of the global (and regional) marketplace (Kwon, 2000). On the other hand, are the traditional Korean concepts of *Hongik Ingan* (universal welfare of mankind), *Jonyang* (keeping the mind quiet and concentrating on building character) and *Gugni* (thoroughly investigating the foundation of the righteous way) (Choi, 2006, p. 9). These concepts appear in the 7th National Curriculum, but are scarce in high school classrooms, where test-preparation is often exclusively practiced. As a result, students are typically well-versed in test-taking skills, but are unable to apply these in the workplace (Gardner, 1993). Instead of being prepared for jobs that require teamwork, collaboration, creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking (information management), students are taught how to compete against each other and memorize information. As a result, wealthy parents who want more for their children send them to schools in the USA, UK or Australia, or pay high fees for multilingual and international schools inside Korea.

The European assessment models mentioned in this paper could offer a partial solution to this dilemma, having been thoroughly developed, piloted, and researched (cf. Davidson & Fulcher, 2007). It is therefore suggested that if a local language evaluation system similar to the CEFR could be designed, satisfying world-wide standards and benchmarks, and offering accreditation for skills, qualifications, experience, and other factors, then Korean students would be able to enter the global job-marketplace without fear about the validity of their qualifications. Furthermore, if such a local system were to contain performance-based criteria, then it could have a beneficial result in secondary English

language classrooms, which would focus more on the *use* of English, alongside grammar-based *usage*. Given that the 7th National Curriculum emphasizes communication over grammar (Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation, 2008), this would be a step towards realizing official educational goals, and would produce graduates fluent in the target language. The cost of such an endeavor would be significant, and rigorous teacher training would be a major consideration. However, the Finnish success story shows that 'you get what you pay for' in education as in every other walk of life. If we want something 'on the cheap,' then we can only expect 'cheap' results. If we want excellence, on the other hand, then it has to be paid for. If we imagine, for example, a society in which teachers are paid more than doctors and are provided with an internationally accredited assessment system, then it becomes immediately evident that such teachers would be the best in the world (since the competition for teaching jobs would be intense) and the students would graduate with excellent skills.

The implications of the suggestions in this paper are not confined to the teaching of English. The aim of language education in the near future should be to "develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. … The languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence" (Council of Europe, 2001a, p. 5). Attempting to attain such a goal through assessment instruments based on Europass, the CEFR and the ELP could provide Korea (and Asia) with "a format in which language learning and intercultural experiences of the most diverse kinds can be recorded and formally recognized" (Council of Europe, 2001a, p. 5).

In conclusion, it is important to remember the traditional values of Korean education and the ethical aspect of testing (Finch, 2002; Shin, 2006). A Korean CEFR which paid attention solely to intellectual achievement would continue to disregard these crucial aspects of education. In this context, learning institutions such as Alverno College have been recognized for their innovative approach to assessment, focusing on eight ability categories: communication, analysis, problem solving, valuing in decision making, social interaction, developing a global perspective, effective citizenship, and aesthetic engagement (Bollog, 2006). These categories are evaluated (with a large amount of self-assessment) in terms of developing skills that students will need in the workplace (learning outcomes).

This paper has thus offered a number of alternatives to the present assessment system in Korea. Though focusing on Europass and the CEFR, other models have been offered as possibilities that might be adapted to the Korean educational, economic and cultural contexts. Whatever the solution chosen by policy makers, it is hoped that such a solution will not succumb to a 'false economy' approach, and also that it will take into account the ethical responsibility of educators in developing the minds and bodies of future citizens.

> In the 21st century information society where the human intellectual capacity will be valued above anything else, Korea's traditional humanistic education and our people's deep respect for education will be important assets for the nation … The present period calls for an education that can direct the students and inspire them to become worthy human beings (Choi, 2006, pp. 13-14).

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Appendix A

Common Reference Levels: Description

Level	Description
A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.

Appendix B

Common Reference Levels: Global scale

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of proficient meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent user	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and Independent disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate Basic need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Appendix C

Common Reference Levels: self-assessment grid

		A1	A2	B1
Understanding	Listening	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.
Speaking	Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
	Spoken production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.
Writing	Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences

		details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	and impressions.

		B2	C1	C2
Understanding	Listening	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	Reading	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical manuals, instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as specialised articles and literary works.
Speaking	Interaction	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can and express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	Spoken production	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.

Writing	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works
Writing			

Examples in: English
Applicable languages: English
Applicable levels: Secondary

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