English Language & Literature Teaching, Vol. 20, No. 1 Spring 2014

The Significance of Teachers' Perceptions of Reforms in English Language Education*

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Yook, Cheongmin. (2014). The significance of teachers' perceptions of reforms in English language education. *English Language & Literature Teaching*, *20*(1), 201-218.

This study investigates Korean English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' perceptions of the Ministry of Education-initiated reforms in English language education. For that purpose, the study recruited 171 in-service teachers and surveyed them with a questionnaire consisting of three sections. The results of the survey indicate: a) the teacher participants were well aware of the Ministry of Education's (MOE's) reform efforts, b) they positively perceived the Communicative Language Teaching(CLT)-oriented direction of the MOE's reforms, c) but their perceptions of specific reform policies and measures were mixed, and d) their negative perceptions of some of the specific policies and measures seemed to have been caused by realities of Korean EFL education. The study interprets the participants' positive perceptions of the MOE's CLT-oriented reforms as showing a significant change in Korean EFL teachers' attitudes toward the MOE's reform initiatives and/or their beliefs about EFL education. The study ends with a discussion of implications the findings have.

[teachers' perceptions/reforms in English language education/EFL context/ constraints]

I. INTRODUCTION

The globalization of the world economy has led to the consolidation of the status of the English language as a lingua franca, and that status of English has been intensifying. Crystal (2003) claims that, as of 2003, some 80% of the world's electronically stored information on the internet was in English (p. 115). As a response to the increasing

* This research was supported by Hallym University Research Fund, 2014 (HRF-201401-001).

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importance of the English language as an international lingua franca, tremendous demands for English language teaching (ELT) have increased in nations belonging to Kachru's (1994) Expanding Circle (EC). Many of these EC nations have attempted to reform ELT by adopting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

Korea is one of these nations. Starting in the 1980s, the Korean government began to highlight the importance of English proficiency. In 1995, the Korean government declared an era of globalization with a goal of preparing the nation to meet the challenges of an increasingly globalized world (Kim, 1999). Under this globalization discourse, the Korean Ministry of Education (MOE) began to institute several concerted efforts to bring fundamental reformation to ELT, announcing various policies and measures aimed to support and facilitate reforms (Kim 1999; Yim, 2003). Among the major policies and measures are attempts a) to change teaching methods (e.g., the adoption of CLT; the Teaching English through English (TEE) policy, which encourages Korean EFL teachers to use English as a medium of instruction; the policy of team teaching between native and nonnative English-speaking EFL teachers), b) to provide environments that can facilitate CLT-based English language education (e.g., the Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) program, which aim to support the team teaching policy by recruiting native English-speaking college students and having them teach English conversation in cooperation with Korean EFL teachers; the "English conversation" instructor system, the policy of differential instructions for students with different proficiency levels; the increase of English conversation class hours; the innovation of curricula of EFL teacher education programs; the introduction of Early English Learning (EEL) policy, which refers to starting English language education at the primary school), and c) to change testing and evaluation methods (e.g., the introduction of listening test items into the Korean Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT); the development of a National English Ability Test), to name only a few (Ministry of Education, 1998, 2006, 2008).

The general consensus in the literature of research on English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) teachers has been that the success of reforms in ELT is contingent upon ESL/EFL teachers' perceptions of the reforms. Li (1998) emphasizes that teachers' perception of the feasibility of an innovation is "a crucial factor in the ultimate success or failure of that innovation" (p. 698). This growing consensus signals the significance of research on Korean EFL (KEFL) teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of the MOE-initiated reforms.

The current study's main research question is: What perceptions do Korean EFL teachers have about the MOE-initiated reforms in ELT? Two related assumptions underlie the study: a) KEFL teachers are principal players in implementing the MOE-initiated reforms and, thus, b) any attempt to implement new teaching practices without considering teachers' perceptions can lead to disappointing results.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term perception seems to have acquired a rather indistinct usage. Calderhead (1996) points out that "such terms as beliefs, values, attitudes, judgments, opinions, ideologies, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, personal theories, and perspectives have been used almost interchangeably" (p. 719). In the study, perception is used to refer to positive vs. negative view. Thus, a teacher's perception of a particular reform refers to the teacher's positive (or negative) view of the reform. In this sense, perception is close to attitude in the study.

An increasing number of researchers have recognized the integral role that teachers play in educational reforms and have conducted investigations of the relationship of the two entities (Bailey, 1992). Könings, Brand-Gruwel, and Merriënboer (2007), for example, investigated the relationship between successful implementation of a government-initiated educational reform and teachers' perceptions of the reform in the Netherlands. The reform aimed to promote students' self-directed learning, collaborative problem-solving skills, and interdisciplinary approaches to a given issue. This nature of the reform called for the role of the teacher "more as a coach and less as an instructor" (p. 988). Könings et al. found, among others, that the 142 teacher participants in general perceived the reform negatively and that their negative perception of the reform led to their less emphasis on productive learning demanded by the reform and more emphasis on reproductive learning.

As discussed in the introduction section, many EC nations have been attempting to reform their ELT. Typically, such reform efforts included the adoption of CLT (Savignon & Wang, 2003). According to Larsen-Freeman (1986), CLT is characterized by a) the focus on communicative competence, b) the orientation toward learner-centeredness, c) the emphasis on the role of teachers as facilitator and providers of a non-threatening atmosphere, d) the employment of group activities, and e) the use of authentic materials. China, for example, began to reform its ELT in the early 1990s, and the reform effort has resulted in more communication-oriented curricula (Zhu, 2003).

The adoption of CLT in EC nations have drawn considerable research interest, and much of the research has focused on EFL teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of CLT and on the impact of the perceptions on their teaching behaviors. For example, Sato (2002) investigated the impact of teachers' perceptions of CLT on their teaching practices in the Japanese context, Kirkgöz (2008) in the Turkish context, and Nazari (2007) in the Iranian context. A general agreement among the studies was that reforms prompted by the adoption of CLT have generally been difficult in EC nations, that EFL teachers' negative perceptions of CLT-related reforms were behind the difficulty, and

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that their negative perceptions were closely related to constraints on the implementation of the reforms. The major constraints listed by the studies include: a) EFL teachers' traditional (that is, grammar-oriented, text-based, teacher-centered) teaching methods; b) their low communicative competence; c) conflicts with the dominant grammar-based testing systems, d) large-size classes, e) the lack of authentic materials recommended by CLT; and f) difficulties of evaluating students taught via CLT.

As in other EC nations, the Korean MOE's reform initiatives have received much research attention. CLT is considered essential to the Korean MOE-initiated reforms. Accordingly, much research has focused on KEFL teachers' perceptions of CLT-related innovations. Li (1998) employed a survey and interviews in order to investigate 18 secondary school KEFL teachers' perceptions of CLT-based teaching, while S Choi (2000) surveyed 97 KEFL teachers to investigate the relationship between their perceptions of CLT-related innovations and their actual classroom teaching practices. More recently, Ahn (2009) investigated the extent to which the recommendations of the 7th National Curriculum announced in 1997 by the MOE, particularly TEE, were instantiated in two teams of pre-service Korean EFL teachers' four-week practicum experiences at a middle school.

A synthesis of the three studies' findings suggests that the implementation of CLT has been difficult in Korea due to teachers' negative perceptions, which in turn were largely caused by several constraints. Among the constraints identified by the studies are: a) the mismatch between the grammar-oriented, text-based, and teacher-centered pedagogical beliefs held by KEFL teachers, b) large-size classes, c) teachers' (as well as students') low English proficiency, and e) the washback effect of the current tests which place considerable emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. These constraints are consistent with those identified in other studies in different EFL contexts (e.g., Kirkgöz, 2008; Nazari, 2007; Sato, 2002).

Other studies investigated KEFL teachers' perceptions of a specific reform policy or measure. Kang (2008) and Son and Lee (2003) explored KEFL teachers' perceptions of the TEE policy, while Paik (2005) and Park, An, and Ha (1997) examined KEFL teachers' perceptions of the EEL policy. Choe (2005) investigated KEFL teachers' perceptions of the MOE's decision to introduce the team teaching policy. The findings of these studies were mixed. For example, Park et al. (1997) surveyed 283 kindergarten EFL teachers and interviewed seven of the teachers in order to investigate their perceptions of the EEL policy. Park et al. found that most of the teachers perceived the EEL policy positively. In contrast, Paik (2005) employed interviews to investigate primary school teachers' perceptions of the EEL policy and found that all of the teacher participants perceived the EEL policy negatively. To take another example, Son and Lee (2003) surveyed 270 secondary school teachers in order to examine their perceptions of

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the TEE policy. Results indicate that the teachers perceived the policy negatively and thus did not fully adopt it in their classroom teaching and that their negative perceptions were due to several constraints such as the teachers' serious doubt of the presumed benefits of the policy, their low English proficiency, their lack of training for TEE, and alleged low English proficiency of students.

In sum, quite a few studies have investigated KEFL teachers' perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms and the relationship of the perceptions to their teaching practices. The general consensus among the studies is that KEFL teachers' perceptions are central to the successful implementation of any particular reform. The studies show that this line of research is important. What the current study aims is to investigate KEFL teachers' perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms and see whether there has been any significant change in their perceptions. Such an investigation will provides us with information on the basis of which we can take appropriate measures to work with KEFL teachers' perceptions and, if necessary, with reforms policies and measures.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

1. Participants

One hundred and seventy-one Korean in-service EFL teachers participated in the survey. The participants were recruited at four in-service teacher retraining programs and through the author's personal network. Of the 171 teacher participants, 116 were female and 55, male. Their average age was 35, ranging from 27 to 48. Twenty-eight were in their twenties; 85, in their thirties; and 58, in their forties. All the participants had at least a BA in English Education or other closely related majors such as Linguistics or English Language and Literature. In addition, 29 participants held MAs in English Education, and five were attending master's programs in English education at the time of the study. Twenty-four of the participants had attended intensive English programs in the USA. The length of the programs they attended varied from one month to one year. Twenty-three of the 171 participants were teaching at primary schools; 92, at middle schools; and 56, at high schools. Their years of teaching experience varied from seven months to 25 years, with the average teaching experience of 8 years.

2. Data Collection

A questionnaire was employed in the study. In developing the questionnaire, the study drew on questionnaires used in previous studies' investigations of KEFL teachers'

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perceptions, attitudes, or beliefs (e.g., S. Choi, 2000; Li, 1998; Park et al., 1997; Son & Lee, 2003). The study also referred to Dörnyei (2007), who provides guidelines for questionnaire construction, administration, and analysis.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections (see Appendix). Section A was intended to gather background information on the participants. Section B included three open-ended questions, which were intended to generate participants' descriptions of their thoughts about the importance of English language education, degree of their familiarity with the MOE-initiated reforms, and reflection of their teaching practices. Section C included 15 Likert-scale items. These items measured KEFL teachers' perceptions of the MOE-initiated reforms and other issues.

In order to ensure the participants' comfort and ease of communication, the questionnaire was given in Korean and later was translated into English by the author for the purpose of presentation and discussion. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and send it to the author via e-mail. All of the participants were paid a modest stipend for their participation.

3. Data Analysis

Two kinds of data analysis were conducted: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data analysis was applied to the open-ended questions in Section B. Qualitative data analysis involves the process of "the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships" among data (Richards, 2003, p. 270). In the analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions, the participants' responses were compressed into core concepts or significant ideas that are repeated in the participants' written responses. Then the frequency of written responses which included similar and/or same core concepts was counted.

Quantitative data analysis was applied to the data collected through the Likert-scale items in Section C of the questionnaire. Responses to these items were numerically coded (i.e., strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1). Participants' responses to the items were analyzed descriptively. According to Dörnyei (2007), the "measures of central tendency" and the "measures of variability" are the two main categories of descriptive statistics (p. 213). The measures of central tendency include mean, median, and mode, while the measures of variability include range and standard deviation. In the study, mean scores and the standard deviations were computed. These numbers were used to show overall trends in the participants' responses.

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IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first question in Section B (i.e., B1) concerned why English language education is important in Korea. The responses show that all the participants agreed that English language education is important. Some of the participants wrote one or two reasons instead of three as requested. Reasons the participants listed were almost uniform. As Table 1 shows, most frequently listed reasons were tied to the role of English as an international lingua franca and its accompanying instrumental values in communication with foreigners, information collection, and international business.

TABLE 1

Reasons Related to the Role of English as an International Lingua Franca

Core concept	Written responses	Frequency
English is an international lingua franca.	Important because it is an international language	143
	Important for communicating with foreigner	55
	Important for conducting international business	26
	Others (e.g., important for academic activities)	33
	Total	257 times

Table 2 shows next most frequently listed reasons. These reasons were concerned with the important role of English in Koreans' lives and its accompanying benefits in employment, college entrance, and social status.

TABLE 2

Reasons Related to the Role of English in Koreans' Lives

Core concept	Written responses	Frequency
English plays an important role in Koreans' lives.	Important because of its decisive role of English in employment	105
	Important because of the society's obsession with English skills	11
	Others (e.g., important because English ability becomes the basis for the evaluation of a person)	33
	Total	204 times

The question B2 related to the degree of participants' familiarity with the MOE-initiated reforms. One hundred forty-two participants responded that they were familiar with major reform policies and measures. Twenty-two participants responded that they did not know much about the reforms, and seven participants provided no response.

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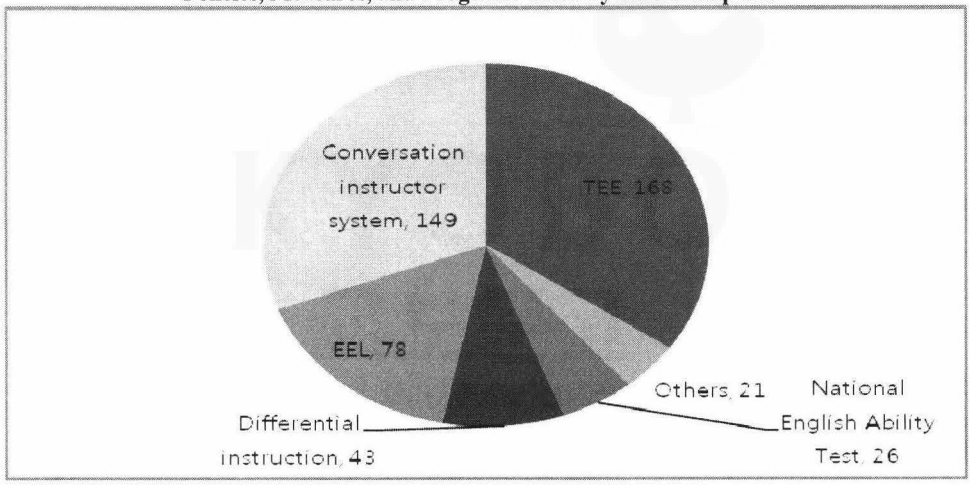
Those who expressed their familiarity with the reform efforts used such expressions as "improvement of English conversation ability" and "emphasis on English speaking skill." These expressions indicate that the participants were well aware that the general direction of the MOE-initiated reforms toward CLT.

In their responses to the latter part of the question B2, the participants listed a number of policies, measures, and programs they knew of. Among the most frequently cited were the TEE policy (168 times), the English conversation instructor system (149 times), the EEL policy (78 times), the provision of differential instructions for students with different proficiency levels (43 times), and the National English Ability Test (26 times). Other policies and programs mentioned by the participants included the TaLK program and the revision of EFL teacher education programs' curricula, among others. Figure 1 presents the results.

FIGURE 1

Policies, Measures, and Programs Cited by the Participants



The last open-ended question B3 asked the participants to one thing they urgently needed in order to improve or change their classroom teaching. Table 3 shows the most frequently cited concern, the improvement of English proficiency. In reporting this concern/core concept, the participants used four different expressions.

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TABLE 3

The Most Frequently Cited Concern in the Participants' Reports on How to Improve Their Classroom Teaching

Core concept	Written expressions	Frequency
Increase of English proficiency	Improving speaking and listening skills	40
	Improving English ability	31
	Holding more confidence in English ability	16
	Speaking English with native-like accent	3
	Total	90 times

Table 4 shows the second most frequently reported concern, which was related to the improvement of teaching skills. This second most frequently reported concern was followed by other concerns such as establishment of "English-friendly" environment (16 times), reduction of class size (9 times), various other reasons (5 times), and no response (5 times).

TABLE 4

The Second Most Frequently Cited Concern in the Participants' Reports on How to Improve Their Classroom Teaching

Core concept	Written expressions	Frequency
Improvement of teaching skills	Learning effective teaching methods	29
	Learning how to motivate students to learn English	10
	Changing toward CLT-based teaching	7
	Total	46 times

In sum, the teacher participants' responses to the three open-ended questions indicate that they thought English language education is important for Koreans either because of the role of English as an international language or because of its decisive role in Koreans' lives, that they were well aware of the MOE's reform efforts, and that they were most concerned with their English proficiency and teaching skills.

The 15 Likert-scale items in Section C concern Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of MOE-initiated reforms. The items were randomized when the actual survey version was prepared and given to the participants. Here, however, in order to make a more effective presentation of the results, items measuring similar or contrasting information are grouped together.

First, items C1 to C4 concern teaching goals. Table 5 presents the participants' responses to the items. Of the items, C2 and C4 are related to CLT-oriented teaching goals, while C1 and C3 are related to traditional grammar-reading-oriented teaching

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goals. The results show that the participants' responses to C2 (M = 3.03, SD = .641) were more positive than their responses to C1 (M = 2.25, SD = .756). The results also show that the participants' responses to C4 (M = 3.13, SD = .700) were more positive than their responses to C3 (M = 1.89, SD = .745).

TABLE 5

Responses to Teaching-goal-related Items

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
C1	Accuracy should be emphasized in the EFL education.	2.25	.756
C2	Fluency should be emphasized in the EFL education.	3.03	.641
C3	Written communication skills (e.g., reading, writing) should be emphasized in the EFL classroom.	1.89	.745
C4	Spoken communication skills (e.g., speaking, listening) should be emphasized in the EFL classroom	3.13	.700

Table 6 presents the participants' responses to the next four items, C5 to C8. These four items concern teaching methods and practices. "Practicing grammar patterns" in C5 is often considered to be a characteristic of the traditional grammar-reading-oriented English language teaching, whereas "to practice English in real-life-like situations" in C6 is considered to be a characteristic of the typical CLT-oriented teaching. The results show that the participants perceived C6 (M = 3.11, SD = .644) more positively than C5 (M = 1.23, SD = .409). The next set of items, C7 and C8, addresses Korean EFL teachers' roles. C8 is related to student-centeredness, which is encouraged by the MOE's CLT-oriented reforms, while C7 is related to teacher-centeredness. The results show that the participants perceived C8 (M = 3.46, SD = .548) more positively than C7 (M = 1.22, SD = .525).

TABLE 6

Responses to Teaching Method/Practice-related Items

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
C5	Practicing grammar pattern is essential for English language teaching and learning.	1.23	.409
C6	It is important to practice English in real-life-like situations.	3.11	.644
C7	Teachers must have a firm control over the classroom.	1.22	.525
C8	EFL teaching must meet students' needs and interests.	3.33	.780

In sum, the teacher participants' responses to items C1 to C8 indicate that they perceived CLT-related characteristics such as focus on fluency, emphasis on teaching and learning English in real-life-like situations, and student-centered teaching more

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positively than traditional grammar-reading-oriented teaching-related characteristics such as emphasis on accuracy, grammar pattern practices, and teacher-centered teaching.

TABLE 7

Responses to Items Concerning Specific Policies

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
C9	English language instruction should be conducted exclusively in English.	2.25	.731
C10	English language education should begin in the primary school or earlier.	3.21	.649
C11	Team teaching with a native English-speaking teacher is helpful for improving students' English proficiency.	2.65	.701
C12	Differential instruction should be provided for students with different proficiency levels.	3.80	.591

Items C9 to C12 concern specific policies and measures that the MOE issued to support and facilitate its reform initiatives. The teacher participants' responses to these items are presented in Table 7. Their responses to C9 reveal that they were less positive about the exclusive use of English in English classes (M = 2.25, SD = .731). This result can be interpreted as the participants' negative perceptions of the TEE policy, which recommends the use of English as a medium of instruction. C10 reiterates the point of the MOE's EEL policy. The participants perceived the statement of the item positively (M = 3.21, SD = .649). C11 relates to the MOE's team teaching policy as well as the TaLK program whose purpose is to support the team teaching policy by recruiting native English speakers. The participants' perceptions of this item were not positive. The remaining item C12 concerns the MOE's decision to implement differential instruction for students with different proficiency levels, which was announced by the MOE in 2006. The participants' perceptions of this item were positive.

In summary, the participants' perceptions of individual reforms initiated by the MOE were mixed. They perceived the TEE and the team teaching policies negatively, but they perceived the EEL and the differential instruction policies positively.

TABLE 8

Responses to Items Related to Constraints

Item no.	Statement	Mean	SD
C13	Teachers need to be fluent in spoken English in order to teach effectively.	3.35	.772
C14	The current system of English proficiency assessment has a great impact upon EFL teaching in the classroom.	3.25	.771
C15	A smaller size class is better for EFL teaching than a larger size.	3.32	.629

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The last set of items, C13 to C15, address some of the constraints that have been frequently identified in previous studies as impeding the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts (e.g., S. Choi, 2000; Kirkgöz, 2008; Li, 1998; Nazari, 2007; Sato, 2002; Son & Lee, 2003). The participants' responses to these items are summarized in Table 8. C13 relates to an expectation created by the MOE-initiated reforms' emphasis on CLT, that is, expectation of EFL teachers' high English speaking proficiency. The result indicates that the participants were acutely aware that the MOE-initiated reforms demands high English speaking fluency from them (M = 3.35, SD = .772). The participants' responses to C14 show that the participants thought that the current testing system had a strong impact on their teaching practices (M = 3.25, SD = .771). As for C15, participants agreed that a smaller size class is better for teaching than a larger size class (M = 3.80, SD = .591).

The results from items C13 to C15 may be interpreted as indicating that most of the participants were much concerned with their own English proficiency, current testing system, and large-size classes, and these have been frequently cited as impeding the implementation of CLT-oriented teaching innovations in EFL contexts.

The whole results of the survey discussed so far can be summarized into the following four major findings.

a) The participants' attitudes toward English language education were highly positive (results from B1). The reasons the participants cited in their responses to B1 (i.e., the role of English as an international lingua franca and the decisive role in Koreans' lives) are related to Bhatt's (2001) econocultural model, which finds the importance of English in its role as the language of global commerce, politics, and cultural activities.

b) An overwhelming majority of the participants were familiar with the MOE's efforts to reform English language education (results from B2). Their familiarity with the reform efforts was evidence by the number of specific reform policies, measures, and programs they cited. In addition, a majority of the teacher participants positively perceived the CLT-oriented direction of the MOE-initiated reforms (results from C1 to C8).

c) However, the participants' perceptions of specific reform policies and measures were mixed (results from C9 to C12). Their negative perceptions of C9 which concerns the TEE policy and C11 which concerns the team teaching policy seem contradict their positive perceptions of the MOE's CLT-oriented reform efforts. Moreover, at least one of their negative perceptions appears to have been dictated by

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self-interest since the negatively perceived policy can be viewed as potential threats to the vested interest of in-service KEFL teachers. This interpretation is partially, if not fully, supported by the participants' responses to B3. Their responses to B3 reveal that they were keenly aware of the possible problem that can be caused by their (low) English proficiency. This concern with their own English proficiency might have been reflected in their negative perceptions of the TEE policy.

d) The participants were also concerned over their teaching skills, large-size classes, and the washback effect of the current grammar-reading-based English proficiency assessment system (results from B3, C13, C14, and C15). These targets of their concerns are some of the constraints frequently identified by previous studies as impeding the implementation of CLT (e.g., Kirkgöz, 2008; Nazari, 2007; Sato, 2002). Among the constraints, pressure of the test has been documented and commonly cited as a detriment to the implementation of CLT (e.g., Gorschu, 2000). These targets of the participants' concerns are also representative realities of EFL education in Korea (S. Choi, 2000; Li, 1998; Son & Lee, 2003). In this sense, it can be argued that the realities of the Korean ELT might have functioned as constraints on the participants' efforts to implement the MOE-initiated reforms.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings reveal complex relationships among the MOE-initiated reforms, the teacher participants' perceptions, and realities of ELT in Korea. The complex relationships in turn reveal mismatches among the participants' perceptions of and attitudes toward the reform efforts. They positively perceived the CLT-oriented direction of the MOE's reform initiatives, while they negatively perceived some of the specific reform policies or measures.

The participants' positive perceptions may indicate a success of the MOE in its reform efforts. It has been generally accepted that human beliefs influence perceptions and behavior and that, thus, teachers' beliefs influence the ways in which teachers perceive educational reforms and conduct classroom teaching (Johnson, 1994; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). That is, the teacher participants' positive perceptions of the general move of the MOE-initiated reforms can be seen as being influenced by their underlying beliefs about ELT in Korea. If this is true, the teachers' beliefs were CLT-oriented. In this sense, the finding does not support the findings of previous investigations. For example, J. Choi (2008), S. Choi (2000), and Kim (2008) reported (pre-service) Korean EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs to be grammar-focused, teacher-centered, and textbook-centered.

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More importantly, however, the finding can be seen as an evidence for the apparent transition of the teacher participants from the traditional grammar-reading-based teaching toward CLT-oriented teaching. If this has been the case, the symptom is encouraging in that the MOE's reform efforts have been successful, at least partially.

At the same time, the participants' negative perceptions (and their possible relationship with constraints) point to the urgency of providing a reform-friendly environment and, more importantly, the necessity of "reality-informed" and "bottom-up" reform efforts. What is needed at this moment are reform policies and measures that are developed more carefully on the basis of a clearer understanding of KEFL teachers' perceptions and their struggles with realities of Korean EFL education.

The study's findings have implications for other EFL countries, particularly for China and Japan. Previous studies show that ELT in these countries is similar to the Korean experience in several respects. First of all, English is considered to be a very important subject in educational contexts of these countries (Butler, 2004, 2005; Kim & Jeon, 2005). Second, these EFL countries have attempted to reform English language education. Third, reforms in these countries have generally been difficult due to several constraints such as teachers' traditional grammar-reading-oriented beliefs and teaching practices, teachers' low spoken English proficiency, large-size classes, and washback effect of the dominant grammar-reading-based testing systems. In short, many EFL countries, or at least China and Japan, share many of the characteristics of EFL education in Korea and thus may benefit from the findings of this study.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire for the Survey

Section A: Please respond to the following questions either by putting X or writing a numeral in an appropriate slot.

1. Gender: male _____ female _____
2. Age: _____
3. How many years have you been teaching English? _____ years
4. Which educational level are you teaching English?
   primary school _____ middle school _____ high school _____
5. What is the highest degree you hold? BA _____ MA _____ Ph.D _____
6. Have you attended any intensive English program in an English-speaking country?
   If yes, where? _____ and how long? _____ months.

Section B: Please respond to the following questions by writing as much as you want.

1. Write three reasons why you think English language education is important in Korea.
2. Are you familiar with the Ministry of Education-initiated reforms in English language education? If so, please describe some reforms of which you know.
3. List one thing you think you need urgently in order for you to improve or change your classroom English teaching

Section C: Please answer the following questions from your perspective as an EFL teacher. There is no right or wrong answer. We are simply interested in your thoughts or opinions.

	strongly disagree			strongly agree
1. Accuracy should be emphasized in the EFL education.	1	2	3	4
2. Fluency should be encouraged in the EFL education.	1	2	3	4
3. Written communication skills (e.g., reading, writing) should be emphasized in the EFL classroom.	1	2	3	4

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4. Spoken communication skills (e.g., speaking, listening) should be emphasized in the EFL classroom. 1 2 3 4

5. Practicing grammar pattern is essential for English language teaching and learning. 1 2 3 4

6. It is important to practice English in real-life-like situations . 1 2 3 4

7. Teachers must have a firm control over the classroom. 1 2 3 4

8. EFL teaching must meet students' needs and interests. 1 2 3 4

9. English language instruction should be conducted exclusively in English. 1 2 3 4

10. English language education should begin in the primary school or earlier. 1 2 3 4

11. Team teaching with a native English-speaking teacher is helpful for improving students' English proficiency. 1 2 3 4

12. Differential instruction should be provided for students with different proficiency levels. 1 2 3 4

13. Teachers need to be fluent in spoken English in order to teach effectively. 1 2 3 4

14. The current system of English proficiency assessment has a great impact upon EFL teaching in the classroom. 1 2 3 4

15. A smaller size class is better for EFL teaching than a larger size. 1 2 3 4

Examples in: English
Applicable languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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Received in January 15th, 2014
Reviewed in February 26th, 2014
Revised version received in March 5th, 2014

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