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Restructuring Achievement Standards in National English Curriculum*

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This study aims to select three main issues in the field of 2015 English national curriculum focused on Achievement Standards (AS) and provide ways of improving AS structure. To achieve this purpose, Focus Group (FG) Method and literature review are employed. A total of 11 FG members are participated from February 2019 to September 2019 for six months in five time group meetings. Data collection was conducted through discussions in FG meetings, and relevant literature review was also conducted and discussed in the process of the FG meetings. The major opinions provided from the FG meetings were mainly selected as supporting data to reconstruct the AS format. CEFR and ACTFL descriptors are analyzed to draw implications to redesign the connectivity of AS in grades three to nine. The results show three issues and respective ways of improving AS structure; the need to employ cultural AS in alignment with objectives of English curriculum, reformat of the AS in vertical dimension connecting grade levels shown in the Singapore curriculum, and comprehensive AS descriptors at the end time of each grade cluster level.

[English assessment and evaluation/achievement standards/national English curriculum/content matrix/CEFR/cultural objectives/global scale]

I. INTRODUCTION

Achievement Standards (AS) in the national curriculum is consisting of main educational contents and performance elements, both of which can be used as criteria for evaluating what learners should know and perform in each subject area. This AS is also

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used by teachers when planning, implementing, and evaluating what to teach and what to be learned by students. Thus, the AS should be clearly described and organized, avoiding enumerated list format (Huh, et al. 2005). The purpose of setting up the AS in the national curriculum is for managing educational quality at the national level. Inevitably, the AS should have a strong connection with the objectives of each subject-based curriculum, and AS in each grade or grade cluster should have hierarchical alignment among them. At the end-time of each grade or grade cluster, students are recommended to achieve the expected outcome described in AS which also should be evaluated by teachers, for which the AS needs to have comprehensive ability descriptors shown in CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018) or ACTFL (2012).

In particular, AS in English subjects should have the skill and performance-based descriptors including both the four main language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and functions such as identifying, describing, understanding, expressing, etc. However, this function and skill-based comprehensive descriptors are not specified in the national English curriculum so far. This comprehensive descriptors such as those in CEFR or ACTFL are expected to let teachers or educators know the extent to which language learners attain the learning targets in each four skill based domain such as listening or speaking.

Besides the necessity of developing the comprehensive AS descriptors, several studies and literature conducted and reviewed on the issues of AS in national English curriculum show the problems and limitations in AS. Those studies and literature point out the lack of connections among the key competences and AS in English curriculum (Lee, 2016, 2017; Kim, S. H., 2017), the lack of alignment between the AS and Content Table which is used for guiding principles when setting up AS (Lee, 2018, 2019), and the lack of connectivity between AS and evaluation methodology in English curriculum (Kang, 2016; Lee, 2019). Other studies also refer to the lack of clarity in AS which may build up barriers for teacher when reconstructing subject curriculum for implementing tailored teaching-learning approach(Kim, Y., 2017), and the need for strengthening the alignment of cultural AS with objectives of English curriculum(Kim & Jang, 2019).

However, those studies above mainly focused on the problems and broad directions for improving the AS, rather than presenting detailed or substantialized plans. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to provide more realistic ways of restructuring AS which can be recognized by field experts such as professors and teachers in English education. More specifically, the major issues can be categorized as the cultural domain, reorganization of AS matrix development, and comprehensive way of presenting English ability level descriptors, which can be applicable to the English teaching-learning process.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Focus Group Method (FGM) is employed for conducting this research in order to collect data in the field of English education. The FG methodology is effective to converge expert opinions and review collected data (Kim, 2001). Kim (2001) shows the characteristics of FGM: First, the purposeful sampling is selected in FGM by the researcher of this paper; Second, FGM is useful when a researcher collects and analyzes several research topics in relatively short time through concentrated conversation. Third, shared opinions among the FG members themselves are used as main research data. Fourth, data collection and data analysis are conducted by both researchers and FG members. Fifth, a total agreement can be reached through FG. However, the minor opinion is not excluded. Sixth, the research stages in FGM includes the stage of a research plan, participant selection, and discussion through which both data collection and analysis are processed concurrently. In line with the merit of the FGM, it is useful methodology to draw a synergy effect by dynamic interactions among participants (Park, et al. 2001). Either the transcribed source data collected through the research process can be used or the mainly agreed opinion for each research topic can also be used as research result in FGM.

This section describes the research process, participant information, data collection, FG tasks, and research period

1. Participants

After completing the research design, the top priority is given to select the participants of this study. The participants should consist of experts in the field of English education. In particular, the experts of the national curriculum who have experiences in revising the national English curriculum, and the teachers who have experiences in teaching English in elementary and secondary schools are considered as major participants. A total of eleven experts were decided to participate in this research. Among them, experts in elementary English education are five in which four professors and one teacher are included. Those in secondary English education are six, in which four professors and one teacher and one principal. The principal has over twenty years of teaching English experiences. Regarding their majors, all participants major in English Education except one whose major is English linguistics. This linguistic majored professor is selected because English curriculum analysis study needs an expert in the field of language knowledge. The professors have rich experiences in writing English textbooks according to the national curriculum. Six members of the participants have experiences in revising the national English curriculum. In this study, detailed individual information and anonymous code number for each participant is not necessarily specified because the decision making for data processing is

done based on major opinion, agreed by most of all participants.

2. Research Process and Period

After selecting the participant candidates at the first stage, I had telephone conversations with them about this research process, the purpose of the study, and the research period. Eleven participants were finally selected. At the second stage, research plan including FG tasks was sent through e-mails as a discussion topic for the first face-to-face FG meeting. Before the first meeting, they were required to review previous studies and collect their colleague opinions. FG tasks include what they will do during this research period such as sharing expert opinion, and selecting data from the literature review. At the third stage, three issues were discussed and selected in the first meeting. At the fourth stage from the second to fifth meeting, the three issues were discussed. As mentioned above, the data for AS improvement plan for each issue is selected when most of all the participants reach an agreement. The minor opinion is also included in this paper for each respective issue. The FG meeting was audio recorded and transcribed by one research assistant for which prior consent was approved from all participants. The research period was for six months from February to September 2019 during which five time FG meetings are conducted.

3. Data Collection and FG Tasks

The main data for this study is two-folded. The one is from the FG members' opinions for each issue which was selected by the participants and researcher, and the other is from the literature. When an issue to be discussed is selected, all the participants collect their source data through literature review and sharing opinions with their school colleagues. Then at the next FG meeting, their own data became the main source for sharing expert's opinions, in which the legitimacy or suitability of the data to support the improvement plan for respective issues was discussed. The main criteria for selecting the data is whether the data can contribute to the clarity of AS, and raise the applicability of AS for teachers to their classroom in order to easily understand the AS and to help reconstruct their own curriculum.

FG tasks are four. First, each participant is required to select what are the three issues to be worth being discussed, and why. Second, after the issue is selected, the participant is required to collect their own data through sharing opinions with their colleague, and through reading previous studies. Third, they are required to openly share any data because minor opinion would not be rejected in the FG meeting. Fourth, they are required to always remember the purpose of this research that the improvement plan is for English teachers, and that whether the data will be of help to the teachers should be the main criteria during the data collection and selection process. Again, data collection and data analysis are done

by the researcher and all participants through FG agreement. Thus each individual discussion log or excerpt is not quoted in this paper. The minor opinion will also be included in each issue.

III. RESULTS

The major issues selected from the FG meeting are the following, with regard to the AS improvement plan. First, the ways of strengthening the connectivity between the objectives of English curriculum and AS should be sought because the AS is the most essential part to realize the objectives. Second, the ways of clarifying hierarchical connections among the AS in grade or grade cluster are also developed. Third, comprehensive descriptors in each skill such as listening or speaking at the end-time of each grade or grade cluster should be developed.

1. Achievement Standards in Alignment with Objectives of English Education

The three main objectives in 2015 revised national English curriculum are described as following: affective domain such as self-confidence communicating in English, communicative language ability in English, and the cultural domain such as the ability to understand a foreign culture and make the simple introduction of our own culture (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 5).

a. Learners have confidence in English use in everyday life communication, with having interest in learning English.
b. Learners have the ability to communicate in English about familiar daily life issues.
c. Learners are able to understand the culture and information of foreign countries, and introduce their own culture in a simple way.

The AS in the English curriculum is presented according to the language four skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, the first and third objectives above cannot find any place to be integrated to AS at lease in the current national English curriculum. This lack of alignment between the objectives and AS is considered a serious problem, because the AS is an essential element to realize the objectives in the national curriculum. Thus, all the participants strongly agree with the necessity of developing ways of improving connectivity. The FG members select the cultural domain rather than affective domain in this research, because the cultural domain improvement plan is more urgent, and because the studies on the affective domain have been rare.

To develop AS in the cultural domain needs to have a theoretical background based on which the AS description can be developed. As mentioned in the Introduction section, several studies raised the problems of this issue, however, at the time of FG meeting, the detailed information or study results on ways of providing cultural AS were also rare, except Kim's study(2010, 2015, 2019). Therefore, the FG members all agree to employ some parts of the study as the main data to this issue.

However, the school teachers participating in this study suggest that they totally agree with the necessity of employing AS in the cultural domain, but we need to carefully approach how to evaluate the AS in cultural domain. In reality, school teachers are not allowed to skip any AS items specified in the national curriculum. Thus, when the AS in the cultural domain is clearly specified in the national curriculum, teachers are forced to develop evaluating items or papers. Their concerns are the ways of how to develop test items in the domain. The evaluation in the domain inevitably places the extra burden on English teachers, which they are worried about. A lot of discussions were made on this issue. Consequently, at this point in consideration of the purpose of this research, we focus on the ways of AS connection with the objectives. The ways of how to evaluate the AS items in the domain is left for further research.

Among the selected previous studies on this issue, implications can be drawn from a study (Kim, Jang, Lee, & Yoon, 2015) which suggests that cultural tasks can be developed and employed in the teaching-learning process in English education according to the four stages for learning target culture. The authors suggest the samples of AS in elementary school English curriculum such as 'learners can understand cultural situation through reading or listening easy and simple passages' or 'learners can look into the similarities and differences between our culture and foreign culture, and pronounce on them.' In line with the authors, Kim(2010) argued the necessity of employing AS in elementary and secondary school English education, suggesting AS samples such as 'learners can write simple scripts on English culture and role play with the scripts'. Kim (2019) provides acculturation stages for teaching-learning culture which is pertinent to cultural adaptation stages (Bennett, 1993). The stages which can be applied to each school level are specified in Kim(2019)'s study(p. 118) shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Correlation between Language and Culture

Acculturation Stages	Stages of Multicultural Literacy	Stages of Languages Acquisition	School Level
Awareness	Pre-competence	Preproduction Early production Speech emergence	Elementary school

Acceptance Adaptation	Competence	Intermediate fluency	Junior high school Senior high school
Integration	Proficiency	Advanced fluency	University

The AS should be aligned with learning content, teaching-learning process, and activities based on the learners' level. At the elementary school level which is Awareness Stage, Kim (2015, 2019) suggests that beliefs, values, norms, and social customs or conventions of other language speakers with the different cultural background can be learned, and also the learners should have an attitude to respect them through activity-based experiences. This point is also put stress in other studies (e.g., Chang, 2017). Kim (2015, 2019) also suggests that at the Acceptance and Adaption Stages, learners need to discuss the similarities and differences of various cultures, and have presentation time based on their discussion. The acculturation stages in Kim (2015, pp. 226-230; 2019, p. 185, p. 200, p. 206) can be modified by integrating the stages and learning goals shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Goals and Subject Matter of the Acculturation Stages

Acculturation Stages	Stages of Multicultural Literacy	Goal	Subject matter
Awareness	Pre-competence	Discovering and Understanding	Familiar to source culture
Acceptance	Competence	Exploring and cultures around the world	Less familiar to source culture
Adaptation	Proficiency	Integrating among cultures	Unfamiliar to source culture

The samples of AS in line with the stages and suggestions above are specified in Kim (2015: 194-197). In the long discussion, the FG members all reach an agreement to modify the samples so that those samples can be connected with the cultural objective in the national English curriculum, ' learners are able to understand the culture and information of foreign countries, and introduce our culture in a simple way (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 5).' Some modifications were made in consideration with the level of vocabulary from the point of teachers. For example, at the level of senior high school, the description "Learners can announce various culture in other countries and discuss the differences from the cultural pluralistic perspective' is modified to 'Learners can express and discuss various culture in other countries'

The modified AS samples are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
The AS Description of Cultural Domain at Each School Level

School Level	Achievement Standards(Sample)
Elementary School	1) Learners recognize various cultures through specific and concrete cultural products. 2) Learners can understand various cultures through role play and experience-based activities.
Junior High School	1) Learners can explore and analyze the differences among other cultures. 2) Learners can understand and respect various lifestyle and customs in other countries
Senior High School	1) Learners can express and discuss various culture in other countries 2) Learners can accept and adapt to the various cultures from various perspectives.

The modified AS in Table 3 shows the employment of essential cultural elements such as perspectives and concepts which cannot be separated from language learning. The FG members suggest that the modified AS shown in Table 3 needs further modification because both the cognitive domain and affective domain should be put into the AS. The need for employing two domains arises from the one teacher participant who argues that the AS should be described in connection with the evaluation methodology and teaching-learning process. In particular, the teacher points out that process-oriented evaluation has been emphasized worldwide from which some implications should be provided to the AS description.

2. Redesign of Achievement Standards Format

The AS in the national English curriculum is designed in alignment with the Content Matrix (CM). However, FG members all agree that the CM does not match the AS because CM itself does not reflect the characteristics of language learning subject. For example, as shown in Table 4 (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 6), the title such as ‘key ideas’ and ‘generalized knowledge’ does not meet the goal or objectives of English language learning. Also the elements in the ‘key ideas’ include sound, vocabulary and sentence, detailed information, main idea, and context. The sound, vocabulary, and sentence should be categorized as a unit for organizing learning contents, and detailed information or main idea are learning content itself. Thus, in the current CM, the learning unit and content elements are mixed, which enlarges the gap between the AS and CM.

TABLE 4

Content Matrix in 2015 Revised National English Curriculum

Domain	Key Ideas	Generalized Knowledge	Function
Listening	sound	identify sound, stress, and accent	identify
	vocabulary and sentence	understand words, phrases, sentences	understand
	detailed information	understand detailed information in dialogue and discourse	understand
	main idea	understand the main ideas in dialogue and discourse	understand infer
	context	understand the flow of dialogue and discourse	understand infer

The skill or function-based Context Matrix is required in the English curriculum. In addition, the AS in English curriculum is presented at each grade level separately. The FG members all agree that the AS need to be restructured in order to clarify the hierarchical connectivity among grade clusters. This connectivity can be found in the national curriculum in other countries. For example, Singapore Ministry of Education (2008) shows the integrated AS Content Matrix shown in Table 5(p. 44).

TABLE 5

Content Matrix for Achievement Standards in Ministry of Education Singapore

SPEAKING AND REPRESENTING									
FOCUS AREAS	LEARNICG OUTCOMES	SKILLS, STRATEGIES, ATTRIBUTE AND BEHAVIOUR	P 5	P 6	SEC 1	SEC 2	SEC 3	SEC 4	REMARKS
SPEAKING AND REPRESENTING SKILLS AND STRA	LO3: Plan and present Information and idea for a variety of purposes (continued)	· Gather and select facts and ideas from one or multiple print and(or) non-print sources, appropriate to the purpose, audience, contact and culture							
		· Identify the appropriate register to use for formal and informal contexts							
		· Enhance meaning through the use of details, experiences and feelings							

TEGIES	· Use discourse makers to signpost stages in presentation(e.g., "For example", "For the next part")
(continued)	· Supports ideas and points of view by integrating selected visual and/or audio resources, verbal and/ or non-verbal cues (e.g., gestures, facial expressions) to convey meaning appropriate to purpose and context
	DELIVERY
	· Speak at an appropriate volume to different audiences and audiences and according to context
	· Maintain appropriate posture
	· Maintain eye contact whit audience
	· use appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues to convey meaning
	· Maintain focus on the gist/ main idea in a presentation
	· Deliver presentation with clarity and fluency
	· Use the appropriate resister for formal and informal contexts
	· Deliver presentations with confidence
	· Emphasize key points to guide listeners in following impact ideas
	· Self-monitor and self-correct during oral presentations

The AS Content Matrix in Singapore in Table 5 integrates the AS of six grades into one matrix from grade P5 to SEC 4. This integrated matrix design clarifies which learning elements such as skills, strategies, attribute and behavior are included in which grade level. For example, the last one 'Emphasize key points to guide listeners in following impact ideas' should be learned in the grades from SEC3 to SEC4, and excluded in the grades P5 to SEC2. Also, the learning element 'use appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues to convey meaning' is emphasized from the very beginning level to the SEC4 through all levels. The more advanced learning element 'Use the appropriate resister for formal and informal

contexts' is not included in the P5, but only in the grade level SEC4 (Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2008, p. 44).

Another characteristic is a way of categorizing content elements in AS which use the main performance function and sub-function. For example, the function verbs such as speak, maintain, use, deliver, emphasize, self-monitor and self-correct are placed under the main performance function 'delivery'. This shows that the Singapore AS Context Matrix is focused on the function-based AS, realizing the characteristics of language learning subject.

Pertinent to the function-based curriculum, ACTFL (2012) also shows the main functions in Table 6 (p. 8). The ACTFL suggests the main functions such as ask, initiate, maintain, create, and narrate which are used as performance elements as expected learning outcome. Another characteristic shown in the ACTFL is a text type which is used as main categorization in accordance with the function. The text type is similar to the language learning unit such as words, phrases, paragraphs, and sentences.

TABLE 6

Functions and Text Types as Performance Elements

Domain	Example	What it describes
Functions	· Ask formulaic questions · Initiate, maintain, and end a conversation · Create with language · Narrate and describe · Make inferences	Functions are the global tasks the learner can perform in the language
Text Type	· Words · Phrases · Sentences · Question · Strings of sentences · Connected sentences · Paragraphs	Text type controlled by the learner is that which the learner is able to understand and produce in order to perform the functions of the level

Referring to and summarizing data regarding AS Content Matrix, the FG members develop the following redesigning format of AS which emphasizes the clear hierarchical connectivity among grade cluster and function-based design shown in Table 7. The original table is shown on pages 13, 22, 33 in the national English curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2015)

TABLE 7
Modified AS Content Matrix (sample)

Domain	Key Elements	Function-based AS	Grade 3-4	Grade 5-6	Grade 7-9
Listening	Sound	**· Differentiate & recognize**			
		[4E01-01]Recognize and differentiate alphabets and sounds of words	√	√	√
		[4 E 01-02]Recognize and differentiate stress, rhythm, accent when listening words, phrases, and sentences	√	√	√
		[9 E 01-01]Recognize and differentiate connected and truncated sound when listening phrases and sentences			√
	Vocabulary and Sentence	**· Understand**			
		[4 E 01-03]Understand the meaning when listening basic words, phrases, and sentences	√	√	√
		[4 E 01-04]Understand the meaning when listening expressions easy and familiar to learners	√	√	√
		[4 E 01-05]Understand the meaning when listening easy and simple directions or explanations in one or two sentences	√	√	√
		[6 E 01-01]Understand the meaning a couple of consecutive directions or explanations		√	√
	Text (dialogue and discourse)	**· Identify & Understand detailed information**			
		[4 E 01-06]Understand easy and simple speech or discourse around learners' daily lives	√	√	√
		[6 E 01-04]Identify and understand easy and simple speech or dialogue comparing objects		√	√
		[6 E 01-03]Understand easy and simple speech or dialogue in pictures or diagrams		√	√
		[4 E 01-07]Understand easy and simple speech or dialogue on familiar topics in learners' daily lives	√	√	√
		[6 E 01-02]Understand simple speech or dialogue on familiar topics in learners' daily lives		√	√

	[9 E 01-03]Understand speech or dialogue about pictures, photographs, or diagrams which are general and familiar to learners' daily lives		√
	[9 E 01-02]Understand speech or dialogue on the objects about daily lives or general topics familiar to learners' daily lives		√
	· Identify & Understand main idea		
	[6 E 01-05]Understand the storyline when listening easy and simple speech or dialogue	√	√
	omitted parts [6 E 01-07], [9 E 01-04], [9 E 01-07]		
	· Infer & Understand context		
	[9E01-05]Infer speaker's feelings and attitudes when listening speech or dialogue on general and familiar topics to learners' daily lives	√	√
	omitted parts [9 E 01-05], [9 E 01-06], [9 E 01-08], [9 E 01-09]		

This redesigned AS matrix has several characteristics. First, it categorizes the learning elements based on functions in which the sub-functions are followed by each main function. This function takes the main role in language learning subject for setting performance standards, by which the national English curriculum is organized. Thus the hierarchical connectivity based on this function is strengthened in this matrix. Second, The AS items are placed in connection with the items in other grade clusters, which enables teachers to identify the connectivity of the AS. Third, the key ideas such as vocabulary, sound, main ideas, or detailed information shown in the CM in the national English curriculum are replaced by key elements as leaning unit such as sound, vocabulary, sentence, text(dialogue and discourse) for maintaining consistency in categorization.

FG members provide suggestions regarding the necessities of conducting further research for more detailed and comprehensive AS matrix. For example, ACTFL matrix includes the main language skills, topics, text types, language knowledge, communication strategies, and cultural awareness. The FG members also point out that further research needs to explore the ways of including cultural domain, and specified communication functions language knowledge such as language forms presented in the last part of the national curriculum,

3. Level Description Based on National Curriculum

The FG members all agree that the national curriculum needs to present a level description for each grade cluster, grades 3-4, 5-6, and 7-9 respectively. In our national

English curriculum, we do not have the comprehensive grade level descriptors based on which teachers can identify learner's expected outcomes at the end-time of each grade cluster. For example, the listening AS has seven items from [4E01-01]'Recognize and differentiate alphabets and sounds of words' to [4E01-07] 'Understand easy and simple speech or dialogue on familiar topics in learners' daily lives'(Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 13).

The way of separated presentation help teachers to identify detailed and concrete content elements. However, the teachers have difficulties to have an idea of which level and what content level are required for learners to achieve in the comprehensive way. This is the rationale for internationally recognized evaluation group to employ the global scale. For example, ACTFL has a comprehensive scale in which five level descriptors are specified such as the level of Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, Distinguished, and each level has sub-level such as High, Mid, and Low. TABLE 8 shows the comprehensive level descriptor developed and used by CEFR. In CEFR scale, three level descriptors with two sub-level descriptors such as a basic user (A1, A2), an independent user (B1, B2), a proficient user (C1, C2). The Table 8 shows descriptors at basic user level (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24) which includes receptive skill and productive skill together as global scale.

TABLE 8

Comprehensive Descriptor at the Level of Basic User in CEFR

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 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.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of need 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.

Table 8 shows a global scale which includes both productive and receptive skill. CEFR also presents each skill-based comprehensive descriptor shown in the Table 9 (Council of Europe, 2018, 56). This Table 9 shows the descriptors only in the level of Basic User (A1 and A2) with the other level descriptors omitted.

TABLE 9
Overall Listening Comprehension in CEFR

OVERALL LISTENING COMPREHENSION	
A2	Can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment), provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated.
A1	Can follow speech that is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for him/her to assimilate meaning. Can recognize concrete information (e.g. places and times) on familiar topics encountered in everyday life, provided it is delivered in slow and clear speech.

In line with the global scale and each skill-based comprehensive descriptor, Jeon and Kim (2018) suggest that the national English curriculum needs to refer those descriptors as a global scale by analyzing the language ability required by each level (p. 68).

TABLE 10
Comprehensive Level Descriptor at Basic User

Level		Language Ability
Basic User	A2	- Understand frequently used expressions relating to direct and important area(family, purchase of goods, familiar information) to learners - Exchange direct information on repetitive and simple context - Describe things which learners need in a simple way
	A1	- Understand and use daily life expressions and simple sentences - Introduce oneself and others, and ask and answer about them - Communicate in a simple way provided others speak slowly and clearly

In summary of the references above, FG members agree that the national English curriculum needs to employ the four skill integrated comprehensive descriptors. However, some of the professor participants and two teachers cast a vote to employ each skill-based descriptor, such as a comprehensive listening descriptor or speaking descriptor. Minor opinion is on employing global scale descriptor including language four skills. The major opinions are based on the rationale that the level gap between receptive and productive skills required in the national English curriculum is so large that the way of integrating the four skill AS is hard to find. Also, the level gap between written language and oral language is also clearly differentiated in the curriculum. Therefore, the listening skill descriptor is developed as a sample in this study.

With regards to the ways of developing a listening skill descriptor, it was suggested by all

FG members that the descriptor should be based on the AS presented in the national curriculum. Thus, the following AS items shown in Table 11 are all analyzed and integrated into one paragraph for the respective grade cluster. Seven AS items in grade 3-4 and 5-6 respectively, and 9 AS items in grades 7-10 are analyzed and shown in Table 12.

TABLE 11

AS Items in 2015 Revised National English Curriculum at Each Grade Level

Domain	Grade 3-4	Grade 5-6	Grade 7-10
Listening	[4E01-01]Recognize and differentiate alphabets and sounds of words [4E01-02], [4E01-03] [4E01-04], [4E01-05] [4E01-06], [4E01-07]	[6E01-01]Understand the meaning a couple of consecutive directions or explanations [6E01-02], [6E01-03], [6E01-04], [6E01-05], [6E01-06], [6E01-07]	[9E01-01]Recognize and differentiate connected and truncated sounds when listening phrases and sentences [9E01-02], [9E01-03], [9E01-04], [9E01-05], [9E01-06], [9E01-07], [9E01-08], [9E01-09]

(Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 13, 22, 33)

The analysis is conducted based on both the function and content elements and language learning unit in all AS items shown in the Table 11. For example, function verbs such as understand, infer, identify, recognize, and differentiate, and content elements such as consecutive directions or explanations, dialogue on familiar topics, and simple speech around learners' daily lives, and language learning unit such as verb, sound, phrase, paragraph, sentence, speech, and discourse. Finally analyzed and completed descriptors for each grade cluster level are shown in the following Table 12.

TABLE 12

Comprehensive Descriptors in Listening Skill for Each Grade Cluster (sample)

Domain	Grade 3-4	Grade 5-6	Grade 7-10
Listening	Can understand the meaning of basic words, phrases, sentences and identify the differences of sounds, accent, rhythm, and stresses. Can identify detailed information on familiar topics in daily life (e.g. very basic personal information or routine matters) in a simple speech or dialogue.	Can identify and understand detailed information and main ideas such as storyline, purpose, and chronological sequence on daily life topic in easy and simple sentences.	Can identify connected or truncated speech sounds in phrases or sentences. Can understand discourse or dialogue familiar to learner's daily life, and follow storyline, detailed information, main ideas, and infer speaker's feeling and attitude.

The comprehensive descriptor shows the hierarchical connectivity among grade clusters. For example, the first level specifies the descriptor as the detailed information on familiar topics in daily life in grade cluster 3-4. The second level specifies the descriptor as the detailed information and main ideas such as storyline or chronological sequence on daily life topics. The third level specifies the descriptor as the ability to infer speakers' feeling and attitude with figuring out the detailed information and main ideas. In terms of listening unit, the basic sounds, accent, and rhythm are required to study at the first level. This basic listening unit is developing to 'connected or truncated speech sounds' at the third level. Therefore, the comprehensive descriptor is expected to help teachers identify and compare the level-based learning outcomes at a glance.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the ways of restructuring Achievement Standards (AS) for which Focus Group Method (FGM) is employed. FG members extract three main issues for AS development in the national English curriculum through five group meeting discussions and literature review. The three issues are discussed and ways of improving AS were described in this paper. Based on the results of this study, three discussions are provided in this section.

First, a sample of the cultural domain AS is suggested as the first research result. The FG members all agree that the AS should be aligned with the objectives of English education. Among three main objectives, only one objective which is about English communication ability is aligned with AS. All items in AS are categorized following language four skills, so two other objectives which are affective domain and cultural domain cannot find any place to be integrated into AS. It is extremely natural for AS in the two domains to be developed from the point of connectivity between AS and the objectives, which is why the FG members all agree with it. However, in this paper, only cultural domain AS is developed. Thus further research should be conducted on the affective domain AS. Regarding the developed cultural domain, as two teacher participants suggest, the way of how to integrate the cultural AS into evaluation method. How to test a learner's cultural ability should also be studied in further research.

Second, an integrated AS matrix is presented as the second research result. Referring to ACTFL, and the national curriculum in Singapore, the newly developed AS matrix is designed in order to strengthen the connectivity among three grade clusters in a hierarchical alignment. Actually, the main stakeholder of the AS matrix is an English teacher. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted on the validity and suitability of AS matrix mainly focused on teachers' perspectives. As some of the FG members raise a

question on whether teachers will think that it helps teachers to reconstruct their own curriculum or not.

Third, the comprehensive skill-based descriptor is developed and presented as the third research result. Converging FG members' discussions and referring to relevant literature such as CEFR and analyzing all AS items in the listening part from grades three to nine, the newly developed descriptor is expected to have several merits comparing to current national curriculum. At least, teachers are able to figure out what content elements and function elements should be achieved by learners at the end-time of each grade cluster. However, as some FFI members suggested, the comprehensive descriptor as global scale needs to be developed through further research. For example, CEFR developed both the global scale which includes language four skills at a single matrix and skill-based comprehensive descriptor. In Korea, the level of productive skill is relatively lower than receptive skill which becomes a barrier to develop a global scale. As of today, the English communication ability of students in elementary and secondary schools is higher than curriculum developers expect, as FG members point out. Therefore, it is worth considering the development plan for global scale matrix in alignment with the national English curriculum.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Language: English
Applicable Levels: Elementary/Secondary

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