



Exploring the Development of College English Education in Korea Through Activity Theory*

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to explore the development of college English education in Korea and to suggest effective English pedagogy in Korean universities by using activity theory and contradiction. English education in Korean universities had two major transitions. The first transition was a shift from the L2 reading and grammar-oriented curriculum to the L2 speaking-oriented curriculum, and the second transition was a movement from the L2 speaking-oriented curriculum to the L2 immersion program. Within the university system in Korea, English pedagogy had contradictions which hampered the progress of students' overall English proficiency. Primary and secondary contradictions were generally resolved as English pedagogy in Korean universities developed, but students were required to have a higher English proficiency in this era of globalization. To solve this tertiary contradiction, several university authorities created international zones where all lectures were delivered in English. While this English immersion program is very effective, it has difficulty in delving into the learning process and psychological state of each L2 learner. To solve this new/quaternary contradiction, another activity theory-based English pedagogy is suggested.

I. INTRODUCTION

College English education in Korea had two major transitions. The first transition was a shift from the L2 reading and grammar-oriented curriculum to the L2 speaking-oriented curriculum in the 90s, and the second transition was a movement from the L2 speaking-oriented curriculum to the L2 immersion program in the late 2000s. Even though these transitions took place based on the needs of the time, it would be very helpful to use activity theory as a theoret-

ical basis to review the history of college English education in Korea.

Activity theory is a theoretical framework that explains the practices of human beings (Lantolf, 2000a, 2000b). Kuutti (1996) described activity theory as a "philosophical and cross-disciplinary framework for studying different kinds of human practices as development processes, with both individual and social levels interlinked at the same time" (p. 25).

Activity theory explicates multiple grounds of human

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actions performed within diverse sociocultural contexts, and it is used to describe aspects of social practice that are believed to help one's psychological development (Lantolf, 2000b). Activity theory can also explain the inherent contradictions within an action; an activity system describes a powerful dialectic rooted in contradictions such as thinking and doing, knowing and performing, individual and society, idealism and materialism, use-value and exchange-value, and internalization and externalization (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 209). Even though activity theory is used as a framework that describes or analyzes a situation, the essence of this theory is to modify itself in the efforts of creating something new to solve contradictions (Thorne, 2004).

While many studies investigated the development process of college English education in Korea, few studies used activity theory (and contradiction) to do it. The researcher used activity theory in this study for two reasons. First, activity theory could explain the development of college English education in Korea holistically, clearly, and concretely. Second, through solving contradictions within/between activity systems, the researcher could suggest effective English pedagogy in Korean universities.

The purpose of this study is (1) to explore the development process of college English education in Korea and (2) to suggest effective English pedagogy in Korean universities by using activity theory.

II. THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH EDUCATION IN KOREA

To understand the development process of college English education in Korea, investigating the history of English education in Korea helps. The education courses of English studies that were established by the Ministry of Education are the guidelines for elementary, middle, and high school English education.

The education courses of English studies in Korea have been revised nine times since its establishment in 1955. In 1955, The Ministry of Education explained the overall goal of the English education courses as following:

First, acquiring an ability to understand the English language by understanding the differences of it from Korean in terms of phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, and form. Second, acquiring an ability to understand the cultural institutions of the English speaking countries by learning different thoughts, emotions, manners, customs, habits, histories, and natural environment of the people/countries. Third, acquiring an ability to understand that, despite the differences mentioned above, mutual respect is a shared obligation between the two countries and justice is the universal principle of human beings. Fourth, acquiring an ability to use and communicate in short and simple sentence structure in modern English and having a basic understanding of that language (Middle school) Acquiring an ability to use and communicate in the sentence structure in modern English and having a

moderate level of understanding of that language (High school). (as cited in J. H. Lee, 2009, p. 32)

Since then, the course has gone through the second revision in 1963, the third revision in 1973, the fourth revision in 1981, the fifth revision in 1987, the sixth revision in 1992, the seventh revision in 1997, the eighth revision in 2007, and the ninth revision in 2015. These revisions included both minor and major changes. Particularly, the sixth and the eighth revisions were considered the most important revisions, because these have changed the direction of the English education in Korea significantly. In 1992, the Ministry of Education announced the purpose and feature of the sixth revision as following:

Direction of English education: First, student-centered English education rather than the teacher-centered one. Second, process-centered English education rather than the outcome-centered one. Third, focusing on the proper and reasonable usage of the language rather than on memorizing it. Fourth, focus of English education on practical value. Fifth, English education that can contribute to the national development and international society. (as cited in J. H. Lee, 2009, p. 47)

Feature of English education: First, since English is an international language, its practical and cultural value is high. Second, English education is necessary for Koreans to properly react to the globalized world. Third, English education is important for preparing for the future society at individual, societal, and national level. Fourth, English pedagogy should be able to incur interest in students at elementary level. (as cited in J. H. Lee, 2009, p. 47)

The most interesting part of the sixth revision was that English was redefined as an international language rather than a foreign language, and the need of its education was emphasized to prepare Koreans for the globalized world. Furthermore, the importance of listening and speaking English was much more stressed than it was before, as the international exchanges increased among different countries.

The eighth revision also put emphasis on English speaking by utilizing multimedia tools. It also focused on using English not only in academic environment but also in daily life. The implication was that it pursued dual language education (i.e., Korean and English), which was a significant change compared with the grammar-centered education in the previous times.

The ninth revision, which was implemented in 2015, was not significantly different from the eighth revision. It also stressed the usage of English both in academic field and in daily life.

These guidelines were formed on the basis of the needs of the time, and college English education also followed these guidelines, generally. Therefore, it would be safe to say that college English education and guidelines for elementary, middle, and high school English education have reflected the same zeitgeist.

III. THE CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITY THEORY

1. The Concept of Activity Theory

Like other sociocultural approaches, activity theory stemmed from the theory of Lev Vygotsky, who was a Russian psychologist. Even though the West was not acquainted with Vygotsky's theory at first, his theory began to receive attention in the late 20th century, especially in the departments of psychology and education (Ageyev & Miller, 1998).

Individuals learn how to mediate new cultural and material artifacts through appropriation. When an individual knows about the mediational artifact, knows how to utilize it, and adopts that mediational artifact in a new environment through his unique interpretation, then, that mediational artifact starts to have originality (Lantolf, 2000a). Engeström (1987) stated that a "newly acquired instrument never stays exactly the same as it was in the phases of its original individual acquisition and internalization. It will change and produce surprises, new qualities" (p. 159).

According to Leont'ev, it is necessary to draw a demarcation line among activity, action, and operation. Activity is a cultural practice of a subject toward an object. Action is a conscious behavior of a subject which is done to fulfill a goal, and operation refers to an automatic movement of a subject (Leont'ev, 1981).

The current approach to activity theory attempts to understand individuals, group action, and motive-driven activities as the core of analysis, modification, and creation. This framework gives priority to human agency. The interactions among human beings are mediated by technical and linguistic symbols, relevant community, historically accumulated rules, and divided labor (Thorne, 2004).

Activity theory does not postulate an individual in a cultural vacuum, but it thinks an individual performs a object-oriented behavior as a member of a certain socio-cultural community through the usage of cultural tools and symbolic artifacts. Since an individual's behavior obtains driving force by motivation, it would be safe to say that an individual's behavior is involved in a different activity from those of others, even though they may seem identical on the surface (Lantolf, 2000a).

Activity system is a graphic representation of an activity theory model. Engeström (1987) expanded sociocultural theory, which was founded on the basis of Vygotsky's mediation, and developed this system (Lantolf, 2001). Activity system is known to be very useful in describing and explaining the interactions among life, society, and cognitive development of an individual (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). It provides an explanation for both sociocultural and heterogeneous natures of our actions.

The basic elements of the activity system are issues of mediation, the internalization-externalization dialectic, and object-orientedness (Lantolf & Centeno-Cortes, 2006). An activity system is not a fixed framework, but it includes transformation and innovation. Moreover, activity systems

do not work independently, and interaction of multiple activity systems bring about further development (Thorne, 2005).

As shown in Figure 1, Engeström's (1987) graph of a collective activity system shows the complexity of a social practice.

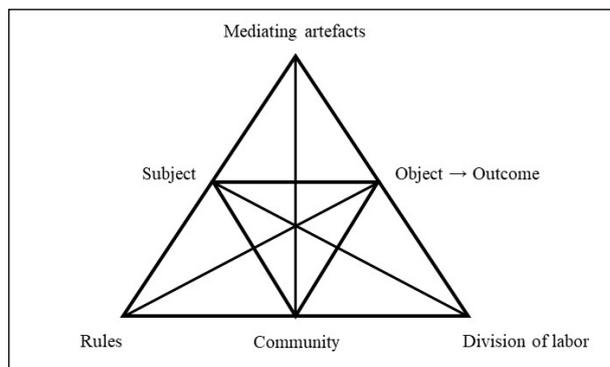


FIGURE 1 Structure of an Activity System (Engeström, 1987, p. 78)

When a subject (i.e., human agent) engage in an activity, s/he uses tools and signs as mediational artifacts to solve a problem within a community. The bottom of the picture shows local activities of human beings and the social and cultural structure on a large scale. The rules/conventions are what the subject should comply with as the agent tries to bring a solution to a problem. Division of labor denotes the social strata of the community where subject belongs. The object is the goal of activities (Engeström, 1987). Engeström mentioned the object as a "material" or "problem space" that will be changed based upon the outcome. Thus, the object opens a new prospect for possible actions (Engeström, 1999, p. 380).

A single activity system is affected by the occurrence of other events and community. It can be noted that such happenings and communities have characteristics of other activity systems. For example, an activity system of a second language class can be affected by other classes, and furthermore, can be affected by external activity systems that are not directly associated with education. Activities such as travelling a country to learn the target language, learning about the culture of a country while touring a museum or an art gallery, or participating in a pop culture performance can all have an influence on learning a foreign language (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Activity systems are intertwined with other activity systems. For example, a teacher's activity system and a student's activity system could overlap each other. While the object of the students' activity system could be fulfilling the academic criteria and the mediational artefact could be the class they are taking, the object of the teachers' activity system could be teaching the students, and the mediational artefact could be textbooks, handouts, and tests (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

2. Development of Activity Theory

Engeström (2001) stated that activity theory developed over the course of three generations.

1) First Generation and Mediation

Vygotsky (1978) insisted that humans responded to stimuli not directly, but indirectly, through the use of technical and psychological tools. In other words, our actions were complex and mediated. The groundbreaking theory in the first generation activity theory was that individual and society were not separate entities, but were interacting with each other.

2) Second Generation and Interrelationship

The second generation activity theory was introduced by Leont'ev. (Engeström, Engeström, & Vahaaho, 1999). While the unit of analysis of the first-generation activity theory focused upon individual, Leont'ev focused on the interrelationships between individual and community. His example of primeval collective hunting displayed the discrepancy between individual action and collective activity, and he claimed that mediation took place through the interrelationship between individual and society (Leont'ev, 1981). In the second generation activity theory, activity system was the unit of analysis that explicated and explained historical, relevant, and creative changes in humans (Engeström & Escalante, 1996).

Introducing the second generation activity theory to the Western world made Leont'ev prominent. During this period, the concept of vertical development, which was regarded as an advanced psychological function, was considered the core of the second generation activity theory. Second generation activity theory, however, was not perfectly appropriate to resolve the issues regarding cultural diversity.

3) Third Generation and Activity System

The discussion of activity theory conducted from the late 1990s to the present day is referred to as the third generation activity theory. In the third generation activity theory, two activity systems that are interacting with each other are considered as the minimal model (Engeström, 2001). Third generation activity theory laid out the groundwork for understanding the culture that had been developed for a long time, and the course of a person's psychological development which had been formed in a relatively short period of time (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

In the third generation activity theory, symbolic interactionism, which meant that social interaction among human beings were mediated through symbols (Star, 1996), and actor network theory (Engeström & Escalante, 1996) were discussed in an attempt to connect micro actions with multiple activity systems through the concept of knotworking (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Engeström, Engeström, and Vahaaho (1999) adopted the concept of knotworking in order to better explain the third-generation activity theory. According to them, the core idea of knotworking is different from that of a team or network. A team refers to a group of relatively stable people, and a network refers to a stable structure that an individual or a group of people can approach. However, knotworking is continuously changing the combination of people and artifacts over a long period of time and within a large space. Engeström et al. (1999) stated:

Knotworking is characterized by a pulsating movement of tying, untying and retying together otherwise separate threads of activity. The tying and dissolution of a knot of collaborative work not reducible to any specific individual or fixed organizational entity as the center of control. The center does not hold. The locus of initiative changes from moment to moment with a knotworking sequence. (p. 345)

IV. ACTIVITY SYSTEM AND CONTRADICTION

Engeström (1987) claimed that a new activity system is created through the process of overcoming the inner contradiction of the previous activity system. Russell (1997) analyzed the activity systems of different genre writings by synthesizing the activity system with a genre system. Based on the analysis, he connected classroom writings with outside-class writings and investigated the transition and evolution of the activity system as the genre changed.

Contradictions can either take place within an activity system or among different activity systems that have different goals and motives. Engeström (2001) stated that contradiction is "historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems" (p. 137).

Contradiction places participants in the activity system in a state of psychological helplessness. Participants feel that there is no solution available to change or improve the conflicting situation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). However, contradiction often becomes the origin of change and evolution. Holland and Reeves (1996) stated that contradiction was the crucial point for understanding a change in an activity system. They claimed that contradiction acted as a catalyst that facilitated the transformation of an activity system. Engeström (1987, 1999) insisted that, through the utilization of the stresses that is displayed inside an activity system or between two or more activity systems, one can restructure and expand that activity system to a more developed one.

Engeström (1987) drew attention to the relationship between corresponding epistemic actions and contradictions of activity systems. According to him, corresponding epistemic actions were part of "expansive cycles," a term he coined, and contradictions acted as catalysts that fostered the development of activity systems.

According to Engeström (1987), even though the nature and potential consequences of expansive cycles are not well known, expansive cycles are necessary for attaining

more in-depth information about activity theory. Engeström (1999) stated that when there were contradictions within or among activity systems, those expansive cycles were likely to result in the development of activity systems. This is illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Types of Contradictions and Corresponding Epistemic Actions
(Adopted from Foot & Groleau, 2011)

Type of contradiction	Characteristics	Corresponding epistemic action(s)
Primary	Occurs between the use value and exchange value of any corner of an activity system.	Questioning
Secondary	Develops between two corners of an activity system.	Analyzing; Modeling
Tertiary	Arises when the object of a more developed activity is introduced into the central activity system.	Examining model; Implementing model; Evaluating process
Quaternary	Occurs between central activity and neighboring activities	Consolidating new practice; Questioning

Engeström (1987, 1999) argued that in all human collective activities, four contradictions existed: Primary contradiction, secondary contradiction, tertiary contradiction, and quaternary contradiction. Within the socioeconomic structure of capitalism, the conflict between exchange value and use value led the primary contradiction to emerge. Primary contradiction also resulted from the idea that commodities were both valuable and worth buying in a free-trade market (Engeström, 2001). Secondary contradiction took place when one node of an activity system counteracted another node within the same activity system. Tertiary contradiction arose when the object of a more advanced activity system was implemented to the main activity system. Quaternary contradiction appeared between the main activity system and its surrounding activity systems.

V. CONTRADICTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE ENGLISH EDUCATION IN KOREA

1. Contradictions of English Education in Korean Universities

The history of English curriculum in Korea was largely represented by two types. One was the reading and grammar-oriented curriculum and the other was the speaking-oriented curriculum. The reading and grammar-oriented curriculum had been utilized from 1945 to the end of the 1980s, but it was changed to the speaking-oriented curriculum in the 1990s. This transition implied adapting students to the era of globalization, and speaking-oriented curriculum is still valid to this date. However, reading and grammar-oriented curriculum is not ignored either, because students of all majors must be able to read books,

papers, or other materials in English to attain cutting-edge knowledge. Upon comprehensive consideration about the various situations mentioned above and some changes that occurred afterwards, the general activity system of English education in Korean universities and the contradictions in this can be illustrated in Figure 2.

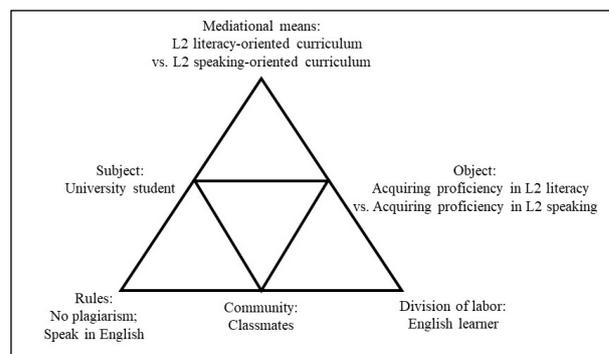


FIGURE 2 Contradictions in English Education in Korean Universities

First primary contradiction is shown in the node of mediational means. L2 literacy-oriented curriculum and L2 speaking-oriented curriculum are placed in a contradictory relationship: Increasing the number of L2 literacy-oriented curriculum would mean decreasing the number of L2 speaking-oriented curriculum, since the number of the courses universities can offer are limited.

Another primary contradiction exists in the corner of object. Under this English curriculum in Korean universities, students have two objects: First, being proficient in L2 literacy (e.g., being able to read and write in English), and second, having a high proficiency in L2 speaking (e.g., being able to communicate, do presentations, and interact with people around the world in English). These two goals could be contradictory with each other: Pursuing one goal (e.g., L2 literacy) means sacrificing the other (e.g., L2 speaking), and vice versa, since the number of the courses students can take are limited.

Secondary contradictions also occur: First secondary contradiction takes place between mediational means and object. L2 Literacy-oriented curriculum (mediational means) creates a conflict with high proficiency in L2 speaking (object), and L2 speaking-oriented curriculum (mediational means) contradicts with high proficiency in L2 literacy (object). Another secondary contradiction occurs between subject and object. Even if the subject wants to attain high proficiency in both L2 literacy and L2 speaking, it will be difficult for him to achieve that goal, because increasing proficiency in one area (e.g., L2 literacy) means neglecting the other area (e.g., L2 speaking), and vice versa, under this curriculum.

2. Contradictions and Development of College Students' English Proficiency Within a University System

The entire university education curriculum is consisted of major courses and liberal education courses. Liberal education courses are composed of English education courses and other liberal education courses. This activity system, however, contains primary contradictions, which are embedded in each node of this activity system. It is illustrated in Figure 3.

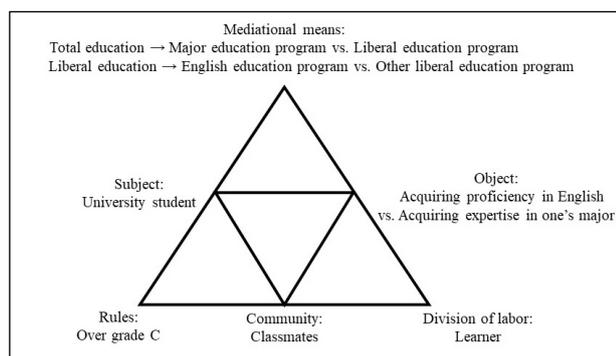


FIGURE 3 Primary Contradictions in Education in Korean Universities

In Figure 3, primary contradictions in the node of the mediational means are as following: First primary contradiction occurs between major education programs and liberal education programs; second primary contradiction appears between English education programs and other liberal education programs. This is a primary contradiction, because it is a zero-sum game; increasing the number of either of the programs inevitably reduces that of the other, since the number of the courses offered by the universities are limited.

Second primary contradiction is in the node of object; goal of a subject could be being both a professional at a certain field and an English expert. To be a professional in an area, acquiring a certain amount of expertise is necessary. On the other hand, English experts are, in other words, people who learned a tool (i.e., English) for conveying knowledge. Investment in expertise is bound to diminish if too much time and effort are invested in language (i.e., English), and vice versa.

In this situation, secondary contradictions also appear. Secondary contradictions arise from the conflicting relationship between the two nodes within an activity system. In this study, three secondary contradictions are identified in Figure 4.

First secondary contradiction occurs between the nodes of mediational means and object, because the contradictions retained by mediational means and object collide with each other. If the university increases the number of major education courses and reduces the number of English liberal education courses, it will contradict the student's goal of being an English expert. On the other hand, if the university increases the number of English liberal

education courses and reduces the number of major education courses, it will be contradictory with the student's goal of being a professional in his major.

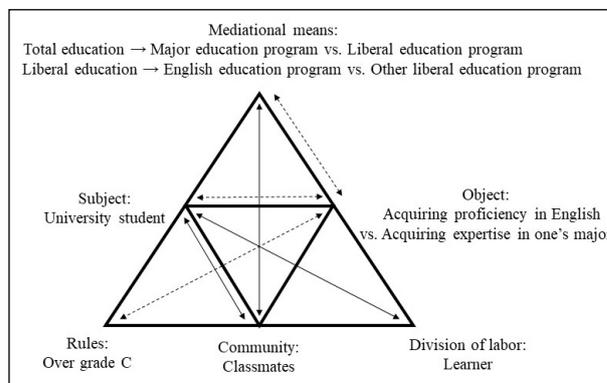


FIGURE 4 Secondary Contradictions in Education in Korean Universities

Another secondary contradiction takes place between subject and object. Goal of the students (subject), which is being both English experts and professionals in their major (object), is difficult to be fulfilled; increasing the effort students put into their major education courses inevitably reduces that they put into English education courses, and vice versa, under this curriculum.

Third secondary contradiction happens between rules and object. Suppose the minimum grade to pass a course is a "C." If students exert themselves only in English courses out of their love for English, instead of putting effort into their major courses, chances are that they will fail in their major courses.

3. English Immersion Program in Korean Universities

In order to solve these contradictions, school authorities proposed to open more than one major course in English in each department. In these major courses, lectures were delivered in English, and students had to submit papers and take tests in English also. Thus, students resolved contradictions to some extent by taking major courses in English and improving both their academic knowledge and English skills. Also, after establishing a sister university relationship with universities in English-speaking countries, school authorities sent numerous exchange students abroad. It was this kind of experience that enabled students to resolve contradictions.

In this way, primary and secondary contradictions were generally resolved, but students were required to have better English skills in this era of globalization. In other words, rather than those who were good at English, Korean-English bilinguals were required. This was a new/tertiary contradiction, and in order to solve this tertiary contradiction, university authorities created international zones where all courses were taught in English. By solving this contradiction, Korean university students could gain both high proficiency in English and expertise in their major at the same time. This phenomenon is illustrated in

Figure 5.

Korea is one of the countries in East Asia where globalization is most radically pursued; thus, Korea has been investing in English education more than other nations have been. Although Korean universities have been sending exchange students to the English speaking countries, only a certain number of students have had a chance to study abroad; therefore, government and schools implemented programs such as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) to foster the remaining students' English learning in this globalized era.

In CLIL, teachers teach subjects in a language other than the students' native language to enhance their linguistic and academic competence at the same time.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), in which pupils learn a subject through the medium of a foreign language, has a major contribution to make to the Union's language learning goals. It can provide effective opportunities for pupils to use their new language skills now, rather than learn them now for use later. It opens doors on languages for a broader range of learners, nurturing self-confidence in young learners and those who have not responded well to formal language instruction. (European Commission, 2003, p. 8)

According to the Action Plan for Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity (European Commission, 2003), before the 1970s, CLIL was implemented in big cities or borderline areas where two different languages were used. Such a teaching method became more popular based on the success stories of the English immersion program in Canada through the 1970s and 80s, and CLIL began to receive attention in many nations in Asia, as well. Consequently, CLIL program was practiced in Korean universities.

Studies on English immersion program have shown benefits of bilingual education. Deveau and Y. J. Bang (2004) proposed that English immersion program (e.g.,

bilingual education) was the most effective English pedagogy for Korean students, and it also promoted the L2 learners' cognitive development. The study of J. K. Park (2006) was on the effect of performing two week English immersion camp on students from 4th grade elementary school students to freshmen in high school. The results exhibited that students showed a very positive attitude about their experience in the camp. In her study, S. A. Lee (2006) explained what she did to develop science CBELT materials for discretionary classes in Korean elementary schools. Despite the difficulty Korean students might experience while learning academic contents in English, she focused on the positive aspects of CBELT materials. J. R. Kim (2007) explained the effectiveness of CLIL among the fourth graders in primary school and stated that content-based model kept developing.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I tried to explore the development of college English education in Korea and suggest effective English pedagogy in Korean universities by using activity theory and contradiction. One of the greatest advantages of activity theory is that contradictions arise in all situations, and activity system develops as one tries to solve the contradictions within/among activity systems (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

First, I searched for the issue of college English education in Korea from the point of contradictions between: English pedagogy whose goal focused on L2 literacy and English pedagogy whose goal focused on L2 speaking.

Then, I located the primary and secondary contradictions in the university education system in Korea. First primary contradiction was caused by the conflict between major courses and liberal art courses; contradiction in liberal arts courses arose from balancing between English liberal arts courses and other liberal arts courses. The nature of the relationship between major courses and liberal

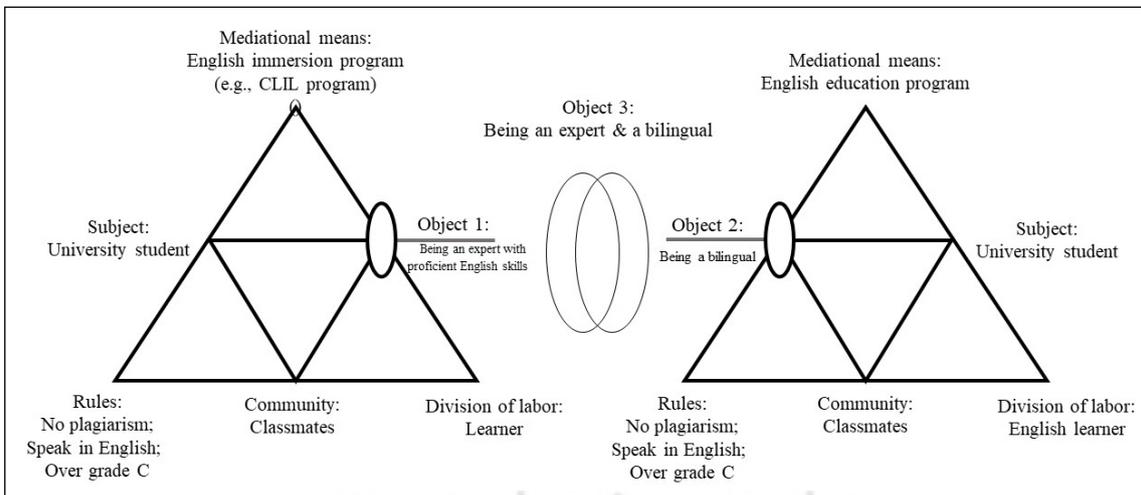


FIGURE 5 Tertiary Contradictions in Education in Korean Universities (Modified From Engeström, 2001)

arts courses, and between English liberal arts courses and other liberal arts courses was a zero-sum game under this educational system: Increasing the number of one entailed decreasing that of the other. Second primary contradiction was found in the node of object: Being professionals who were versed in their expertise and being English experts who had highly proficient English skills were contradictory with each other under this educational system, since students had to sacrifice one goal to achieve the other one.

First secondary contradiction occurred between the nodes of mediational means and object. If the university increased the number of major courses and reduced the number of English liberal arts courses, it would be difficult for students to be an English expert. On the other hand, if the university increased the number of English liberal arts courses and reduced the number of major courses, students would find it hard to be professionals in their major. Another secondary contradiction appeared between the corners of subject and object. Students' (subject) being English experts and professionals (object) simultaneously would be difficult; too much investment in expertise result in lack of investment in English, and vice versa. Third secondary contradiction happened between the nodes of rules and object. If students put their effort only into English-related courses and neglected their major courses, it is highly probable that they would fail in their major courses, and vice versa.

In order to solve these contradictions, school authorities opened more than one major course in English in each department and sent numerous exchange students to English-speaking countries. In this way, primary and secondary contradictions were generally resolved, but in this era of globalization, students were required to have higher English proficiency (i.e., bilinguals). This was a new (i.e., tertiary) contradiction, and in order to solve this contradiction, university authorities created international zones where all courses were taught in English. In other words, this was the process of solving contradiction between: Training university students into English-Korean bilinguals and training them into experts who could take classes in English.

Korean government and civil societies set English immersion program as future English pedagogy. Each local government competitively opened English towns, where people lived using only English for a certain period of time. The emergence of departments offering all lectures in English at various universities can be understood in the same context.

However, English immersion program is not the most adequate pedagogy which could be used to delve into each L2 learner's learning process. Understanding each L2 student's cultural background and psychological state is very important in helping them reach their potential and steepen their learning curve. This could be done by solving quaternary contradiction, which appears between the main activity system (i.e., activity system of a student) and its surrounding activity systems (i.e., activity systems of other students). For example, each student has his or her

unique way of learning; one student might excel in a certain environment while others might suffer, and vice versa. Teachers could have face to face talk with every student to understand the most effective learning method of each student, and capitalize on that information to create a new class which could benefit the students in the most effective way.

Four pedagogical implications were found in this study: First, with the usage of activity theory and contradiction, teachers could have a more holistic perspective at their classes and develop them by solving the contradictions that arise in their classrooms. Second, teachers should learn to maintain balance between teaching knowledge and using English. If teachers only focus on conveying knowledge (e.g., expertise) to students, English could be neglected. On the other hand, if teachers lay more stress on using English than they do on teaching knowledge, it could hamper students' expertise learning. Third, delivering lectures in English would mean more English practice for both teachers and students, especially in countries like Korea, where English is spoken as a foreign language by the majority of the population. Teachers should make the best of this opportunity to most effectively enhance the English proficiency of both teachers and students. Fourth, teachers should pay attention to each student's individual needs, since each student has different way of learning, and it is teachers' attention that can help students reach their full potential.

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