The English Majors' Expectations, Experiences, and Potentials: Inputs Toward Korea's Globalization

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Abstract

This paper determined the English majors' a) expectations in terms of class contents, teaching methodology, and teacher's professional/personal traits; b) experiences in terms of English classes, outside school socialization, and dealings with foreign professors; and, c) potentials in terms of critical thinking-driven and communicative activities. Results revealed that there is a discrepancy between their expectations, experiences, and potentials in achieving communicative competence due to cultural aspects, amount of communicative outputs, limitation of critical thinking, teaching and learning orientations, and English education system. However, the researcher still believes that Korean students majoring English still have the potentials to excel in communicative challenges towards Korea's globalization by putting up more international schools that are affordable and English conversation clubs on campus, by implementing CLT-based approach more meaningfully, by integrating culture in the curriculum but use effective techniques to draw out student's attention to communicate, and by designing a curriculum training program for English teachers and English majors more meaningfully.

Keywords: communicative competence, 'strong' and 'weak' versions of communicative approach, instrumental motivation, cultural competence, culturally competent teaching and learning, critical thinking

1. Introduction

In South Korea, English language education began in 1883 when the Joseon government opened its English language school to Korean students to become interpreters of English (Kim, 2011).   In 1999, policy makers decided to push through the idea of making English a national language along with Korean, due to the challenges of the 1997 economic struggles (Frouser, 2009). Since then, conversation classes have become mandatory aiming to develop communicative competence (Kwon, 2000). The Ministry of Education (MoE) (2008) of Korea cited in Dailey (2010, p. 4) stated in the curriculum that:

> "To contribute to the nation and society, to show leadership as a cosmopolitan citizen, and to enjoy a wide range of cultural activities, the ability to understand and use English is essential. The ability to communicate in English will act as an important bridge connecting different countries, and will be the driving force in developing our country, forming trust among various countries and cultures" (p. 41).

Kroeker (2009) stated that "this requires drastic changes in teacher and student roles, classroom expectations, materials, testing, and beliefs about learning and teaching" (p. 5). Various studies and empirical evidence of other English teachers have testified that both students and teachers have problems in developing communicative competence.

To evaluate the relevance of this circumstance, the researcher has observed English and Literature majors on how well they could communicate in English anytime a need arises. Some of them have shown to possess communicative and linguistic competence, but their ability to communicate in English is not enough to sustain communicative challenges due to hesitations and too much self-consciousness. This is obvious in *Public Speaking, English and Literature Film,* and *conversation-based* classes that promote critical thinking-driven and communicative activities. Specifically, these students seem to show difficulties in oral discussion through presentations and multiple choices and true-false activities wherein they have to show how well they could do defenses on their opinions and ideas. At some point, others would just stop participating because they feel that their expectations to succeed are not met objectively by the English professors. More of the issue dwells on the spontaneous interaction that is needed in critical thinking-driven activities and aspects of learning attitudes and learning styles.

They are English majors and will soon become English professionals who will contribute to Korea's globalization. Korea's globalization implies that English majors are expected to develop their full potentials (also affecting their students' communicative potentials if they plan to teach) that further improve economic advancements of Korea.

This concern is worth investigating because English classes taken at the university are the basic courses in preparation for such purpose. The researcher sees the imperative need to conduct a situational analysis to directly identify students' expectations, experiences, and potentials in their English classes and social interaction outside classes that may contribute to the aforementioned demands and that, the unfavorable realities of English language education will be diminished eventually.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is a mirror on how much learners have acquired language meaningfully. Richards (2006) defines competence as "the knowledge of a language that accounts for ability to produce sentences in a language. It refers to knowledge of the building blocks of sentences (e.g., parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses, sentence patterns) and how sentences are formed". He explains further that communicative competence includes the following aspects of language knowledge: "1) knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions, 2) knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication), 3) knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations), and 4) knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies)".

Moreover, Richards (ibid.) differentiated communicative activities that focus on fluency from those that focus on accuracy. In summary, activities focusing on fluency are 1) reflect natural use of language, 2) focus on achieving communication, 3) require meaningful use of language, 4) require the use of communication strategies, 5) produce language that may not be predictable, and 6) seek to link language use to context. Activities focusing on accuracy are 1) reflect classroom use of language, 2) focus on the formation of correct examples of language, 3) practice language out of context, 4) practice small samples of language, 5) do not require meaningful communication, and 6) control choice of language.

Thus, Communicative language teaching (CLT) approach comes into play to develop students' communicative proficiency. However, it is also important to note that CLT approach is distinguished to have its 'strong' and 'weak' versions:

> "There is, in sense, a 'strong' version of the communicative approach and a 'weak' version. The weak version which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communication purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching… The 'strong' version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former could be described as 'learning to use' English, the latter entails 'using English to learn it.'" (Howatt, 1984, p. 279, in Richards & Rogers, 2008).

Both strong and weak versions of CLT have been observed in South Korean universities. Conversation classes or communicative type of classes has been imposed by Government Language Planning and Policies (LPPs) in South Korea, but still teachers encounter more

confusions and problems.

Kroeker's (2009) study investigated conversation classes in a South Korean university. She focused on the five (5) researched areas, namely: 1) conversation as a construct, 2) standards for conversation classes, 3) role of conversation classes, 4) teachers of conversation classes, and 5) expectations of conversation classes.

As for *conversation as a construct*, the students described conversation as the most simplistic. It was also revealed that "over half the students were neutral or agreed that conversation could be practiced solitarily while the others disagreed". This scenario suggests that English conversation may be considered as "an academic endeavor rather than a social practice".

As for *standards for conversation classes,* it was found that there is no specific standard in conversation classes, as long as they are consistent on speaking generally. Students viewed conversation classes as a means to improve their conversation skills, while the teachers and administrators felt that these classes are more general. Thus, it was thought that these classes could become meaningless if no stated purposes, goals, and an evaluation process, for conversation classes are not prioritized objectively.

As for *role of conversation classes,* the data showed that the ultimate function of English conversation classes is not to build communicative competence; rather, it is more related to economic factors. Learning how to speak English has the ultimate reason of getting a better employment in Korea. In fact, "having English classes also provide certain economic benefits such as financial support from the government", as emphasized by Kroeker (2009).

As for *teachers of conversation classes,* the finding was that administrators had arranged for low and some mid level conversation classes for Korean English teachers and mid to high level classes for native English teachers. However, real conversation classes were not facilitated objectively. Low level classes were said to be grammar-focused whereas mid and high level classes were speaking-focused. Kroeker (2009) pointed out that "low level classes might not be considered conversation classes; whereas, the others might be viewed as speaking classes without specification to conversation."

As for *expectations of conversation classes,* the data revealed that conversation classes have clearly not been given objective attention by the top management level for whatsoever reasons. Kroeker (2009) perceived that "the administrators are disconnected from each other where their duties may not involve discussing particular course expectations and therefore course standards, definitions, goals, and evaluations." Thus, teachers and students should have a direct dialogue on how to improve conversation classes.

In Ramos' (2012) study, he investigated the communicative difficulties of university students at a South Korean university. Specifically, pre-communicative, actual communicative, and post communicative activities were investigated by employing triangulation (i.e. multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of information).

In terms of *difficulties on pre-communicative activity*, the data revealed that students from other departments found difficulty in anticipating the whole process of an activity as it was

more complex than just using a checklist or a note for activity preparation; only good students could anticipate the whole process as objectives of an activity was given beforehand. Furthermore, students may use a checklist or note for activity preparation to facilitate comfortable performance when there was difficulty or when an activity was over. Only few of them found following activity directions or instructions difficult, because simple instructions as well as examples were provided. In fact, some allied medical sciences students, like nursing and medical radiation were able to follow instructions.

In terms of *difficulties on actual participation in communicative activity*, it was understood that students in general could not initiate a conversation with any topic until a teacher started to converse with them. In making follow-up questions and/or statements of other students, they could hardly do until they were promised to receive highest grades or when a teacher or an interesting topic motivated them to inhibit shyness. In interacting spontaneously with correct grammar usage and expressions, only very few students could perform in almost activities with some grammar mistakes, while most students could not as they lacked study habits. Moreover, the observation justified that students lacked exposure to conversations. Middle school and high school English classes trained them with passive learning methods such as memorization of words, mastery of grammar points, and mere listening to teachers; thus, in an activity, students with no confidence could not carry out their previous learning in actual practical conversation. Others, however, only survived in conversation with partners, while few in patterned/structured dialog or substitution drills.

In terms of *difficulties on post-communicative activity*, the data explained that in reflecting on interaction performance, students could only recall until a teacher asked them to, while others were not interested to say anything at all.   In making adjustments on attitude and skills for the next conversation activities, they seldom could at some point as it took time to feel comfortable with other students, and even got failed as they did not practice with enough time in various interactive activities. Basically, they just slept, felt tired and thought of no courage to speak. Only few of them realized the importance of positive participation. And in noticing good conversational strategies from other students, they failed in some situations even they tried to.

As a consequence, communicative activities were not implemented satisfactorily as expected because the students were not oriented with the CLT-based approach when they were in middle school and high school; thus, they were shy and withdrawn in the classes. Those few students who were interested and studious showed desirable communicative competence but limited to a certain degree.

Moreover, Ramos (2012) observed students' frequency of attitudes towards communicative activities. It was clearly identified that students were only participative in communicative activities when they were not conscious of grammar and when they knew they could talk a lot freely about any interesting topics. Some of them manifested their limits of ability in conversation time though, due to lack of exposure. Some treated it as a challenging part; while, others thought of it as tiring and useless, they were just forced to come for the sake of attendance. Sometimes, they just felt good when they were able to communicate in English.

In fact, there were some who were excited to practice, as it is useful in job-seeking, and were proud eventually when they improved or achieved something.

Krashen (2002) explains that "when the practical value of second language proficiency is high, and frequent use necessary, instrumental motivation may be a powerful predictor of second language acquisition. Instrumental motivation is "the desire to achieve proficiency in a language for utilitarian, or practical reasons, may also relate to proficiency". It encourages performers to interact with L2 speakers in order to achieve certain ends. Additionally, when the student feels at ease in the classroom and likes the teacher, he may seek out intake by volunteering (he may be a "high input generator") and may be more accepting of the teacher as a source of intake (Seliger, 1977, in Krashen, 2002). Ramos (2012) concluded that students' positive attitude towards the English language classroom may also be manifestations of self-confidence and motivation, and they were likely to have more results in acquiring the language.

Thus, due to the limitations of CLT and observable problems among English classes in South Korean universities, it is best to formulate EFL inputs that consider Korean students' real needs and culturally competent teaching and learning approach.

2.2 Culturally Competent Teaching and Learning

Lyons (1990) defines cultural competence as "the ability to understand and use language in a way that would be understood by the members of that culture, since culture cannot be thought separate with its social value." Erton (2007) further explains that "culture may be described as socially acquired knowledge: i.e. as the knowledge that someone has by virtue of his being a member of a particular society." To achieve goals of a language curriculum in which teachers and students are both actors, a curriculum developer with a support group is expected to possess sensitivity of integrating culture-based orientation. Thus, Irish and Scrubb (2012) propose the following:

Culturally competent teaching and learning facilitates critical reflection. They explain that "a critical analysis of one's own cultural assumptions is foundational to culturally-responsive teaching and learning. Further, they explain that "culturally-responsive teaching engages students in self-awareness activities that lead to reflection on cultural assumptions that may dislodge misconceptions and stereotypes."

Ramos' study (2013) titled, "Diminishing Cultural Boundaries in the English Literature and Film," revealed findings on cultural understanding and activity grouping. As for cultural understanding, 60% agreed and 13% strongly agreed that they were likely to be more participative in class discussions and activities. They believed that the class gave them the chance to differentiate English from Korean language for making judgment as basis for cultural understanding. As for group grades, 63% agreed and 13% strongly agreed that they were more motivated to learn because sharing ideas and opinions with other students could better their group grades or points. Group or pair work to earn collective points is a form of learner's reflection on how to survive in a class. Irish and Scrubb (2012) conclude that "diverse instructional groupings allow students to learn about individual differences and to

reflect on their own assumptions and beliefs."

Culturally competent teaching and learning demands respect for others. Teachers and students possess their own culturally inculcated values, and they respectively manifest these through verbal and non-verbal interactions (Irish & Scrubb, 2012). For example, "when there is little diversity, the overwhelming presence of "whiteness" may be intimidating to students of color and English Language Learners (ELLS) and may serve to silence their voices" (ibid.). This example can be true to less confident students who tend to take a backward step when they are asked to talk lengthily in front of the native speakers. However, for students who have strong positive outlook towards conversation, they succeed. Ramos' study (2013) revealed a result on students' behavior towards discussion and activity. As for culture-oriented class, 45% agreed and 10% strongly agreed that they were more assertive to join discussions and class activities because it is taught by a foreign teacher or professor. In fact, it was not threatening to their culture while they were developing communicative skills in English. They always helped each other and cared so much about their fellowmen -- that is one of their inculcated values that made them succeed in a group activity.

Rajabi and Ketabi (2012) concluded that "teachers need to reflect on their cultural judgment and adjust their world-view in the light of these cultural constraints" if there is any. To maximize students' potentials, it is suggested that "localizing certain aspects of culture by adopting the target language culture without neglecting local cultural values" (ibid.) is also important. Local cultural values are characterized by "students' positive assertion on developing their English language skills further, considering cross-cultural dimensions" (Ramos, 2013). Irish and Scrubb (2012) also conclude that "culturally responsive methods such as inter-cultural communication stimulate respect for the needs of all learners and allow every voice to be heard."

Culturally competent teaching and learning involves accommodating individual learners. Irish and Scrubb (2012) emphasize that "good teachers not only learn from, but learn about their students --- that is, learning about the cultures and languages of individual students provides a foundation for implementing effective accommodations that facilitate learning." Ramos' study (2013) made use of film analysis presentation where teachers were able to listen to students' opinions and ideas. This is how they accommodated their learning and expressed their freedom to speak up. Irish and Scrubb (2012) support that "learning about students involves listening to them, interacting with them, and modeling for them."

Furthermore, they point out that "effective accommodations for diverse students may include extra time on exams to accommodate the additional load on mental processing, exams in another room where students are able to write, read aloud, then revise their answers to test questions, or time to verbally elaborate on their written responses with the instructor."

Culturally competent teaching and learning requires the use of intercultural communication skills." Culturally competent instructors are willing to learn from their students; they recognize the potential of intercultural communication as a means for enhancing the learning of the entire learning community" (Irish & Scrubb, 2012). They further elaborate that "effective communication with others who are linguistically and culturally different includes the use of

techniques like active listening, elaboration, paraphrasing, and restatement."

University students in Korea are well equipped with listening tasks. Facturan's (2013) study revealed a very high increase on the post-immersion performance skill tests in listening from the control group with a grand mean score of 16 (very good). The five areas of the listening skill (i.e. pronunciation, information, presentation, vocabulary, and language) were incredibly performed by the students. They interacted with the group members very well, enjoyed each group's presentation and showed a very high interest in learning the English speaking. The students developed self-confidence and reliance to each other. Irish and Scrubb (2012) emphasize that "active listening strategies are especially important when participants speak different languages. They conclude that "intercultural communication strategies such as active listening inform learning and facilitate critical reflection."

Culturally competent teaching and learning requires focused activities and intentionally structured environments. Perspective-taking behavior requires an understanding of norms, values, and traditions that have informed the other's worldview and learning behaviors (Irish & Scrubb, 2012). They point out that "ranking the value of ideas such as tradition, religion, independence, education, work, health, respect, honesty, food, etc. and a review of personal rankings with other class members may lead to meaningful conversations".

Yun's (2013) made use of the culture-oriented syllabus and instructional models. These focus on both linguistic and cultural knowledge of the textbook, showing how to combine language and culture in ELT. In addition, questionnaire survey and classroom observations in the socio-cultural test showed that "culture teaching is only regarded as the way to assist linguistic competence development, and culture knowledge is only a component that belongs to the knowledge of culture." Moreover, she pointed out that "knowing more about the aspects of culture can help EFL learners have a better and an all-round understanding of the target language they are learning as well as the community of the target language, and further develops their cultural awareness and culture competence."

In support, Irish and Scrubb (2012) emphasize that activities that are referred to ranking of the value of ideas "may encourage students to engage in critical reflection on deeply held assumptions related to values and beliefs." Ramos' (2014) study titled, "The Openness to Cultural Understanding by Using Western Films: Development of English Language Learning," believed that encouraging students to learn could be assisted by how teachers show students empathy and enough support. As for discussion and other activity completion, the study revealed that 35% of the student respondents agreed and 28% strongly agreed that when a teacher seemed not strict, but rather helpful, they were likely to be more focused to complete any classroom activities. This belief developed their mind setting in language skills development.

The researcher believes that culturally competent teaching and learning are very essential in formulating English language teaching inputs to achieve students' communicative competence, motivation, and confidence. However, that is not all. Communicative competence implies the inclusion of critical thinking skills development, one of the capacities of language learning. Widdowson (1983) defines capacity "as procedural in the ability to use

knowledge as means of creating meaning". In creating meaning, critical thinking skill should be mastered by English majors, especially those who are planning to teach.

2.3 Critical Thinking Skill

Critical thinking is a component in achieving class objectives that lead teaching and learning process more meaningful. Scriven (1996) defines critical thinking as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action." Swartz (2001) believes that teaching skilful thinking does not only enhance students' thinking abilities and learning in the content areas, but also greatly improves the quality of their lives, including their professional work after they leave school. Additionally, Alwehaibi (2012) emphasizes that "as thinking skills develop, students gain instruments that can be used effectively to reason better through the thinking tasks implicit in their future goals."

Therefore, teaching critical thinking skills is essential for English majors. Oliver and Utermohlen (1995) cited in Adsit (2007) imposes that "students need a guide to weed through the information and not just passively accept it. They further explain that "students need to 'develop and effectively apply critical thinking skills to their academic studies, to the complex problems that they will face, and to the critical choices they will be forced to make as a result of the information explosion and other rapid technological changes." By so-doing, thinking skill activities facilitated by English teachers would direct students to result-oriented motivation, study habit development, and professional readiness.

With the information above, this paper has made a point that teaching-learning process with critical thinking needs to have a strong basis to establish EFL inputs in support to the Korea's globalization.

3. Research Method

This study conducted in a South Korean university is exploratory-quantitative-interpretative in orientation. This means that the design is non-experimental, the data collected are primarily quantitative, and the analysis is highly interpretative.

The study utilized quantitative data since frequency counts for the survey results through questionnaire were considered. The number of survey respondents was determined by purposive-cluster random sampling with the Slovin's formula. This formula was used to determine the number of students in the FGD (Focused Group Discussion) as well as the professors who were interviewed. Frequency count was determined by the percentage formula.

Moreover, qualitative approach also employed since interviews with the English professors and FGDs with students were considered. Both approaches mentioned are exploratory, since the primary objective of the study is to provide deeper insights into the problem.

Based on qualitative perspectives, this study employed triangulation in the sense that multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of information were considered. Multiple

methods of data collection included were survey questionnaire, interview, and FGD. Multiple sources of information included were 49 third year students, 26 fourth year students; 7 professional English; and 6 FGD groups (7 to 8 members per group); and course contents or syllabuses used in English classes.

The analysis of the data is primarily interpretative. This means that the researcher described the English majors' expectations, experiences, and potentials in relation to the realities of English communicative environments that involve communicative and critical thinking-driven activities stated in the research instruments.

4. Results and Discussion

The results are divided into three (3) parts, namely: a) English majors' expectations, b) English majors' experiences, and, c) English majors' potentials in the communicative environments in South Korea.

Figure 1 presents the English majors' expectations in terms of class contents, teaching methods/strategies/techniques, and teacher's personality.
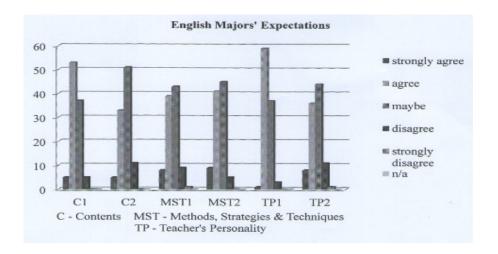

Figure 1. English Majors' Expectations

As for *class contents*, it is clearly shown that 53% of the student respondents agreed and 5% strongly agreed that they could learn sufficient knowledge on developing their potentials, as described in the syllabus' description and objectives, while 5% disagreed. 37% of the student respondents responded that they were not sure on that. However, it is surprising to know that 51% of them were not sure whether they could apply the knowledge and skills into practice anywhere and anytime. Only 33% agreed and 5% strongly agreed on doing well with that, but 11% disagreed.

There is a mismatch between the class contents and performance skills of students. One American professor in the interview saw this factor on the English education approach. According to him, teachers and students struggled with the approach due to cultural difference. This is characterized by lecture-based and memorization based. In the FGDs

(focused group discussions), students also expressed their disappointment on book-based approach being implemented in the class when they were in middle and high schools and even sometimes at the university classes that has resulted students to become passive and shy.

This can be explained by what learning styles students can facilitate to produce their language skills and how they can cope with communicative challenges. Oxford (2012) explains that skilled L2 learners select strategies that work well together and that are tailored to the requirements of the language task." However, there can be other factors that indicate the students' low performance in the language even if language tools are provided. Oxford (2012) believes that "when allowed to learn in their favorite way, unpressured by learning environment or other factors, students often use strategies that directly reflect their preferred learning." In addition, he explains that "students' L2 learning styles and their underlying learning styles are often directly related to culturally inculcated values" (p.127).

As for *teaching methods/strategies/techniques*, 43% of the student respondents refused to claim whether they could see their professors changing their teaching styles based on difficulty level of the lesson and student's interests. Only 39% agreed and 8% strongly agreed that they could see their professors' effort on that regard, but 9% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed. Moreover, 45% also refused to confirm whether they could see communicative-driven strategies or techniques enabling to boost their confidence and competence. While 41% agreed and 9% strongly agreed on their potentials in communicative-driven strategies or techniques, the rest 5% of the respondents disagreed.

Naturally, professional skills can affect teaching styles that may affect difficulty level of lessons and students' level of interest. The American professor usually challenged his students to bring some creativity if they want an "A" grade. In terms of content-based learning, he expected students to come with an open mind, try to get some new ideas, and try not to feel uncomfortable whenever he used different teaching methods. In the communicative activities, one Canadian professor in the interview used a scaffolding technique until students felt comfortable. She gave them phrases, semi complete dialogue as a start of interaction, and other hand-holding guidance techniques. One Chinese professor in the interview emphasized that 30% of his students in the class needed a special instruction because most of them just received messages passively; while, others were just outgoing, flexible, and very active. Students in the FGDs even expressed expectation that foreign professors should give them more conversation opportunities.

Oxford (2012; also see Vann & Abraham, 1989) explains that this students' encounter indicates that "many of the less effective L2 learners are indeed aware of the strategies they use, can describe them clearly, and actually use just as many strategies as effective L2 learners do; however, less effective learners apply these strategies in a random, even desperate manner, without careful orchestration and without targeting strategies to the task." Teachers then have the big role on building student's effective learning techniques to help themselves get closer to their expectations.

As for *teacher's personality*, 59% of the student respondents agreed and 1% strongly agreed that they could see their teachers being flexible, resourceful, and very interactive in teaching

the class, while 3% disagreed. The rest 37% were not sure on these particular traits of teachers. Additionally, 44% were not sure whether they could rely on their teachers being lenient on giving performance tests and other types of reinforcements. However, 36% agreed and 8% strongly agreed that they could rely on those traits, while 11% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed.

In the FGDs, students believed that they should learn from their professor. When a professor exerted effort to make them feel more comfortable, they felt energetic to learn more. This includes any types of reinforcement or measurement. Both Canadian and Chinese professors agreed that personality (such as outgoing, personable, compassionate, and communicative) is also important. This gives justice to the belief that a good student can be a reflection of a good teacher. Richards (2012) argues that "activities which seek to develop a reflective approach to teaching aims to develop the skills considering the teaching process thoughtfully, analytically, and objectively as a way to improve classroom practices."

Figure 2 presents the English majors' experiences in terms of English classes, outside school socialization, and dealing with foreign professors.
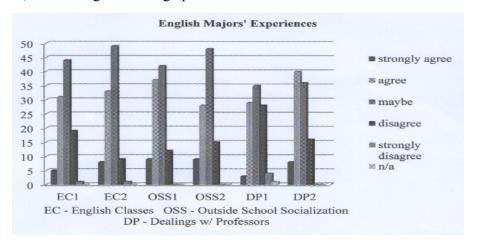

Figure 2. English Majors' Experiences

As for *English classes*, 44% of the student respondents expressed no assurance whether they were able to use English to convey their feelings and thoughts accurately and fluently without being misunderstood. While 31% agreed and 5% strongly agreed on their ability in this skill, 19% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed. Furthermore, 49% also expressed no assurance whether they were able to report or present their opinions or ideas in front of the class as required by their professors. The rest 33% agreed and 8% strongly agreed on their ability to report and present in front of the class, while 9% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed on this possibility.

Students in the FGDs revealed that Korean English education approach has something wrong. When they were in middle and high school classes, teachers focused on book-based approach and listen-and-repeat method, that results to lack of communicative competence. The issues are also related to the lack of students' strategic competence. Strategic competence is "the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and

redirect communication" (Richards & Rodgers, 2008). That may mean that students perhaps did not learn as much as expected of them in a class due to their nervousness, culture orientation, and lack of exposure to the language. Richards and Rodgers (2008) point out that "language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process." They further explain that "learning activities are consequently selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic use, rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns" (p.161).

Moreover, not enabling to report or present opinions or ideas in front of the class is also a factor of lack of discourse competence. According to Shumin (2012), "both the production and comprehension of a language require one's ability to perceive and process stretches of discourse, and to formulate representation of meaning from referents in both previous sentences and following sentences." These are the basic components to express opinions, ideas, and emotions. However, the professors in the interview as validated by some students in the FGDs revealed that students seems to still have great potentials in the communicative activities.

As for *outside school socialization*, 42% of the student respondents were not sure whether they could initiate conversation with foreigners and apply their English language skills with confidence. However, 37% agreed and 9% strongly agreed that they were able to initiate conversation, while 12% disagreed on this. Additionally, it is surprising to know that 48% were not also sure whether they could give inputs on how to improve English education in Korea through their English learning background. With confidence, 28% agreed and 9% strongly agreed though on their capacity to give inputs for such purpose, while 15% disagreed.

The results indicate that students were not able to maximize both their knowledge and skills together into communicative challenges outside school because there were only very few native speakers around whom they could practice their conversation with. Few students in the FGDs argued that since Korea has not treated English as a second language, reading a book and listen-and-repeat are the best methods to improve their English; mimicking is a basic element of learning the language. However, some students in the FGDs also argued that there are other ways to learn English, it only depends on student's motivation, confidence, and learning styles. Nunan (2012) emphasizes that "opportunities to reflect on the learning process, and to develop new learning skills could help learners to identify and articulate differences between their school experiences and those encountered at a university."

As for *dealing with foreign professors*, it is important to note that 35% were not sure whether they often received feedback from professors about their strengths and weaknesses on the English language learning. Only 29% agreed and 3% strongly agreed that they often did so, while the remaining 28% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. Only 1% thought that it was not observed in the class. Additional information is that, 40% of the student respondents agreed and 8% strongly agreed that they usually had the motivation to speak with professors regardless of who they are and what they think of them. However, 16% disagreed on this and the remaining 36% were not even sure of this scenario.

Not receiving feedback from professors about their strengths and weaknesses may cause affective struggle that leads to either success or failure in motivating themselves to learn further. This affective factor may contribute to students' exhibition of communicative competence. Shumin (2012) argues that "speaking a foreign language in public, especially in front of native speakers, is often anxiety-provoking, or may sometimes cause extreme anxiety that may lead to discouragement and a general sense of failure". However, there are always two sides of a coin. Students may have anxiety; but because of motivation, they may be successful at some point. One student in the FGDs revealed that she has the confidence speaking with foreigners outside due to her experience meeting foreign teachers in school, although she lacks vocabulary skills. Another student revealed that when she traveled to another country, she was able to explain her situation in English.

Figure 3 presents the English majors' potentials in terms of critical thinking-driven activities and communicative activities.
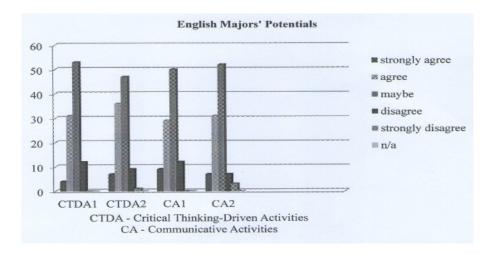

Figure 3. English Majors' Potentials

As for *critical thinking-driven activities*, 53% of the student respondents refused to show confirmation whether they were able to analyze and interpret complex ideas, opinions, or situations both in literature and language classes. Only 31% agreed and 4% strongly agreed on their skills for analysis and interpretation, but the remaining 12% disagreed. Additionally, 47% were also doubtful whether they were able to develop good organization of thoughts and art of delivery to show absolute comprehension. Only 36% agreed and 7% strongly agreed on their ability to perform this particular skill, but 9% disagreed and 1% disagreed.

Reasons for this occurrence are carried out by the way students' are taught in lower years. According to Oliver and Utermohlen (1995) cited in Adsit (2007), "students are too often being passive receptors of information." However, some students in the FGDs became open-minded to critical thinking activities because they could widen their logic by organizing their thoughts or information with proper words and grammar. To make it well-managed, the Canadian professor used different sides of arguments and generally picked up benign topics.

In addition, Adsit (2007) emphasizes that "it is important to teach students how to ask good questions, to think critically, in order to continue the advancement of the very fields we are teaching." In addition, Center for Critical Thinking (1996a) argues that "every field stays alive only to the extent that fresh questions are generated and taken seriously."

In facing globalization, Koreans need to master English with the goal of being able to communicative with foreigners whether in business or other forms of socialization. The American professor agreed that having those tools to be able to think on their feet without reciting something from memory is the kind of approach they really need. Beyer (1996) sees critical thinking as an important tool for teaching students "to live successfully in a democracy". Adsit (2007) adds the point that "if students learn to think critically, then they can use good thinking as the guide by which they live their lives."

As for *communicative activities*, 50% of the student respondents refused to confirm whether they are able to do role play comfortably with a copy on hand. However, 29% agreed and 9% strongly agreed on their ability to perform such skill, while 12% disagreed on this. In addition, it is important to note that 52% also refused to confirm whether they are able to manage conversation well with different levels of questions or any type of difficulties. Only 31% agreed and 7% strongly agreed on performing that particular skill, while 7% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed.

According to Shumin (2012), "if one cannot understand what is said, one is certainly unable to respond. So, is speaking is closely related or interwoven with listening, which is the basic mechanism through which the rules of language are internalized." Further, he explains that "the fleetingness of speech, together with the features of spoken English - loosely organized syntax, incomplete forms, false starts, and the use of fillers - undoubtedly hinders EFL learner's comprehension and affects the development of their speaking abilities" (p. 205).

Despite the results, the researcher still believes that most students can cope with communicative challenges. The American professor in the interview revealed his classroom management skills. Aside from teaching the content of his class, he spent twenty minutes dedicated to conversation time. With that, he was able to get opinions from students on controversial topics of international news successfully. Targeting something that they have strong opinion about is important to draw out critical thinking that leads them to become more communicative.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Students' responses that fell mostly on "agree" and "maybe" (or "neutral") did not show a big gap (or difference) in percentage. As manifested in the students' questionnaire, FGDs, and teacher interview, students were found to have a discrepancy in their expectations with their experiences and potentials because the English education in Korea in some classes in the university and middle and high schools still focus on book-based approach, lecture method, listen-and-repeat strategy, and other passive transactions of learning such as memorization, grammar mastery, reading, etc. Consequently, these students could not elaborate their thoughts and feelings in critical thinking-driven and conversation activities. They also turned

out to be shy, less confident, and less motivated in the communicative environments.

However, the results suggest that there is a big chance to speed up the development of English education in Korea. The professors in the interview were still optimistic on the change Korea is planning. Since Koreans are becoming more aware of other styles of education, their actual experiences, and their directions towards globalization, Korea's English education will modernize a lot more quickly. Korean schools have developed programs to overcome the issues on communicative competence struggles of their students, and development of this project is rising year after year. Professors and students in the FGDs have foreseen Korea in five (5) years to have promising results. Korean English teachers are going to get better because the older teachers who continue these older styles are getting older and they are retiring. And, the younger, global-minded teachers who studied in the USA, the Philippines, etc. and have been to Australia, Canada, and other English-speaking countries are taking over the work force. That means Koreans in schools will study with more dynamism in which technology is a big part of that. Students will be able to use English more in educational games, while getting more sophisticated, also because of easy access to educational videos anywhere.

Moreover, English will eventually become like a second language because learning English is indispensable in the Korean society, not just a choice. This is possible since the country is small, and multicultural community is growing up rapidly. Among adults, there is a lot of competition, and this has been observed by young people who are preparing towards more communicative direction.

However, a few respondents concluded that the English Education in Korea is moving up and down, as it has been the trend for past years. That might result to slow change because a touch of culture interference still exists whatever changes are made. It is then very important to note that "students' L2 learning strategies and their underlying learning styles are often directly related to culturally inculcated values" (Oxford, 2012).

To lessen the issue and for the rapid, systematic direction to Korea's globalization in terms of English language teaching and learning, the recommendations are made.

For educators in Korea or The Ministry of Education (MOE), they should 1) put up more international schools that are affordable; 2) put up English conversation clubs on campus; 3) implement CLT-based approach more meaningfully; 4) integrate culture in the curriculum but use effective techniques to draw out student's attention to communicate; and 5) design a curriculum training program for English teachers and English majors more meaningfully.

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