

# Asian-EFL-Journal

## December 2003 Articles

[| September 2003](#) | [June 2003](#) | [March 2003](#) | [December 2002 Articles](#) | [September 2002 Articles](#) | [June 2002 Articles](#) | [Home](#) | [Past articles](#) |

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### **The types of speaking assessment tasks used by Korean Junior Secondary school English teachers**

#### **Abstract**

This study aimed:

- to identify the types of speaking assessment tasks used by Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers and the ways in which those assessments were administered;
- to investigate Korean teachers' perceptions of the practical constraints in Korean EFL classrooms which affect assessment of speaking.

This study was conducted, using qualitative methods, with ten Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers. All ten participants responded to a questionnaire which asked for opinions on speaking assessment as well as professional, educational and personal background. Four of the ten also participated in an interview with the researcher to clarify their perceptions of speaking assessment.

The study found that the speaking assessment tasks used by Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers were those which:

- gave the students less psychological burden;
- were time-saving and designed for the convenience of construction and administration;
- did not demand the teacher to take the role of an interviewer.

As well, the study found that when assessing the speaking skills of their students, Korean Junior Secondary School teachers were not concerned with the validity and reliability of their assessments. Nor were the teachers equipped with an adequate theory of speaking assessment. As a consequence, the teachers had little

confidence in conducting speaking assessment.

The study revealed the practical constraints of the Korean context which affected the assessment of speaking in the EFL. Participants reported such constraints as large classes and time-consuming, excessive work in addition to face-to-face classroom teaching, lack of training in conducting speaking assessment, lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments, difficulty in eliciting students' responses.

The conclusion is reached that although Korean teachers need to have assistance and encouragement to try new ways of communicative assessment in their EFL classrooms, they need to make themselves aware of the shift in social and educational needs and to make conscious and persistent efforts to introduce more communicative speaking assessment in spite of practical difficulties. For their part, educational administrators need to show greater sensitivity to the teachers' complaints of excessive workload and to reflect teachers' points of view in their decision-making.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to the research**

Testing oral proficiency has become one of the most important issues in language testing since the role of speaking ability has become more central in language teaching with the advent of communicative language teaching (Nakamura, 1993). As Bostwick and Gakuen (1995) state, assessment can be used to improve instruction and help students take control of their own learning. That is more likely to be accomplished when assessment is authentic and tied to the instructional goals of the program.

However, there are many difficulties involved in the construction and administration of any speaking assessment. There is a great discrepancy between the predominance of the Communicative Approach and the accurate measurement of communication ability (Hughes, 1989).

With the widespread adoption of communicative language teaching (CLT) in ESL countries (Hartley and Sporing, 1999), it is replacing the traditional grammar-centred, text-centred, and teacher-centred methods in Korean Junior Secondary Schools. With training in CLT offered by in-service teacher education programs, Korean Junior Secondary English teachers have been trying to expand CLT in their classrooms (Li, 1998).

However, although many English teachers in Korean Junior Secondary Schools are interested in CLT, communicative assessment has received little attention. If it is important to know if a person can speak a second language, then it should be important to test that person's speaking ability directly (Jones, 1977). Despite the interdependence of communicative teaching and communicative assessment (Bachman, 1990), speaking assessment in the Korean Junior Secondary Schools does not assess students' oral proficiency from the perspective of language use and communication. As Nagata (1995) pointed out, rote memorization of text dialogs has been a common practice for speaking assessment in Korea. It seems that Korean English teachers do not concern themselves much with matters of validity and reliability in relation to speaking assessment (Li, 1998).

However, the need for classroom teachers to be equipped with some measurement tools to evaluate students'

oral proficiency is becoming more and more important (Nagata, 1995). Speaking assessment has become a vital part of all the examinations in all the Korean Junior Secondary Schools; every school is required, by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, to perform students' speaking assessment at least once each year. The schools referred to in this study take a speaking assessment twice a year.

Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers, however, find it difficult to assess students' oral proficiency in a way which reflects authentic interaction (Li, 1998). Thus, there is a contradiction between their communicative language teaching and their assessments of speaking which do not reflect authentic oral interaction.

## 1.2 Research aims

There seems no prominent research on speaking assessment from the point of view of the teacher in Korea. In particular, the perceptions of Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers in conducting speaking assessment remain largely unexplored. Yet, teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of a communicative assessment in a particular context are crucial in determining the ultimate success or failure of that assessment (Kelly, 1980).

Thus, this study focuses on Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers' perceptions of speaking assessment.

The research questions are

1. In what ways do Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers conduct assessment of students' speaking?
2. What are their perceptions of the practical difficulties of assessing speaking?

With these questions this research aims:

- 1) to identify the types and the ways of speaking assessment used by English teachers in Korean Junior Secondary Schools;
- 2) to investigate teachers' perceptions of the practical constraints in Korean EFL classrooms, which affect the teachers' assessments of speaking.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews prominent studies to support the present research. The principal areas to be discussed are communication and communicative competence, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), speaking assessment, and the teachers' perceptions of speaking assessment.

### 2.1 Communication and communicative competence

As a basis for investigating communicative competence, the researcher begins by defining what communication is. Morrow (1977) describes seven features which characterize communication. According to him, communication

- \* is interaction-based
- \* is unpredictable in both form and message
- \* varies according to sociolinguistic discourse context
- \* is carried out under performance limitations such as fatigue, memory constraints, and unfavorable environmental conditions
- \* always has a purpose (to establish social relations, to express ideas and feelings)
- \* involves authentic, as opposed to textbook contrived language
- \* is judged to be successful or unsuccessful on the basis of actual outcomes (Morrow, in Rivera, 1984:39).

An adequate description of the nature of communicative competence is crucial to instrument content and instrument method (Weir, 1990). According to Ellis (1994:696), communicative competence is "the knowledge that users of a language have internalized to enable them to understand and produce messages in the language".

Several models of communicative competence have been proposed (Ellis, 1994). Chomsky (1965) proposed the concept of grammatical or linguistic competence and highlighted cognitive aspects of human language acquisition and learning. He distinguished between competence (one's underlying knowledge of the language) and performance (the realization of language in specific situations). On the other hand, Hymes (1971), who coined the term 'communicative competence' emphasized social, interactive, and negotiating process of language. Hymes expanded Chomsky's notion of competence into communicative competence by including both grammatical rules and rules of language use (Hymes, 1971; Taylor, 1983).

Canale and Swain (1980) identified three distinctive components of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence includes one's knowledge of lexical items, morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology in a language. Sociolinguistic competence encompasses the knowledge of rules governing the production and interpretation of language in different sociolinguistic contexts. Lastly, strategic competence is defined as one's capability to sustain communication using various verbal or nonverbal strategies when communication breakdowns occur. This model was updated by Canale (1983). He proposed a four-dimensional model of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence.

Bachman (1990) suggested a theoretical framework for communicative language ability. It includes knowledge structures, strategic competence, psychophysical mechanisms, context of situation, and language

competence. Language competence is further divided into organizational competence (grammatical and textual competences) and pragmatic competence (illocutionary and sociolinguistic competences).

Bachman (1990), in his schematization of 'language competence' takes a broader view of the role of strategic competence than Canale and Swain do. Bachman separates strategic competence from what he calls 'language competence'.

Agreement on what components should be included in a model of communicative competence is never unanimous (Weir, 1993). In spite of many disputes by applied linguists (Lluda, 2000), this notion of communicative competence outlined above has proven useful in suggesting specifications for content, formats, and scoring criteria in communication-oriented language proficiency assessment (Bachman and Palmer, 1984). However, "it must be emphasized that they are still themselves in need of validation" (Weir, 1990:8).

## 2.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) starts with a theory of language as communication. The classroom goal of instruction is focused on developing learners' communicative competence. Thus, learners are encouraged to communicate with target language through interaction from the beginning of instruction.

In CLT, meaning is most important. Larsen-Freeman maintains that "Almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent" (1986:132). Accordingly, the process of meaning negotiation is essential in CLT (Paulston, 1974). In order to encourage learners to communicate better, errors should be tolerated with little explicit instruction on language rules (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Naturally, CLT favours small group activities by students to maximize the time each student has to negotiate meaning. CLT employs information-gap activities, problem-solving tasks, and role-plays through pair and group work (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

Another feature of CLT is its "learner-centredness view of second language teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:69). According to Savignon (1991), every individual student possesses unique interests, styles, needs and goals. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers develop materials based on students' demonstrated needs of a particular class.

CLT emphasizes the use of authentic materials in teaching language (Widdowson, 1996). It also encourages giving learners the opportunity to respond to genuine communicative needs in real-life situations. This is to help learners develop strategies for understanding language as actually used by native speakers (Canale and Swain, 1980).

## 2.3 Speaking assessment

Testing oral proficiency has become one of the most important issues in language testing since the role of speaking ability has become more central in language teaching (Hartley and Spring, 1999). Assessment needs to be theory driven. The concept of validity, reliability and efficiency affect assessment design (Bachman, 1990). In this section the various types of validity will be discussed. As well, it will be discussed

how the concept of validity relates to those of efficiency and reliability.

### 2.3.1 Validity

Spolsky (1975) stated that validity is the central problem in foreign language testing.

Validity is concerned with whether a test measures what it is intended to measure (Weir, 1990). A test of speaking ability in a classroom setting is usually an achievement test. An achievement test should have content and face validities (Davies, 1983). Since content validity asks if the test content matches the content of the course of study (Bachman, 1990), what teachers can do is to match the course objectives and syllabus design with the test items. This attitude by teachers is crucial in a classroom test because teachers may tend to use test tasks different from the course objectives especially when oral aspects are involved (Nakamura, 1993).

Face validity pertains to whether the test 'looks valid' to the examinees, the administrative personnel and other technically untrained observers (Bachman, 1990). Face validity is a must in a classroom speaking test, because the students' motivation is promoted for speaking if a test has good face validity (Hughes, 1989).

Language testing can be put on a scientific footing through construct validity (Hughes, 1989). Bachman (1990) also highlighted that construct validity is the most fundamental validity for a speaking test. Construct validity examines if the test matches a theoretical construct (Bachman, 1990). This cannot easily be handled by classroom teachers because of the abstract nature of language abilities (Nakamura, 1993).

### 2.3.2 Reliability

The concept of reliability is particularly important when considering communicative language testing (Porter, 1983). Reliability is concerned with the extent to which we can depend on the test results (Weir, 1990).

Rater reliability is important to overall test reliability. What raters need to do for this purpose is to achieve high inter-rater reliability for these assessments. The degree of inter-rater reliability is established by correlating the scores obtained by candidates from rater A with those from rater B. The concern of the rater is how to enhance the agreement between raters by establishing explicit guidelines and maintaining adherence to them for the conduct of this rating (Bachman, 1990).

Although reliability is something raters need to try to achieve in the tests, it may not be the prime consideration all the time (Bachman, 1990). It is said that there is a reliability-validity tension. Reliability offers a possible compromise. It is occasionally essential to sacrifice a degree of reliability to enhance validity (Davies, 1990). For example, in certain circumstances, reliability and validity are mutually exclusive. However, if a choice has to be made, validity is more important for speaking assessment (Bachman, 1990).

### 2.3.3 Test efficiency

A valid and reliable test is useless if it is not practical (Bachman, 1990). "This involves questions of economy, ease of administration, scoring and interpretation of results" (Bachman, 1990: 34). The context for the implementation of a test is a vital consideration. Classroom tests should not require costly

specialized equipment or highly trained examiners or raters (Weir, 1993). The tasks should be the most efficient way of obtaining the information about the test takers. There is much pressure on teachers to make tests as short and practical as possible because teachers cannot afford to spend much time in assessing students' communicative ability. However, "this should never be allowed to put at risk test validity" (Weir, 1993: 22).

To sum up, there is a need to develop test formats that provide overall balance of reliability, validity and test efficiency in the assessment of communicative skills (Bachman, 1990). Authenticity as a concept has also been a major concern in language testing (Bachman, 1990). Therefore, it is considered necessary to briefly examine authenticity.

### 2.3.4 Authenticity

According to Bachman (1990), authenticity is defined as a quality of the relationship between features of the test and those of the non-test target-use context. There are two approaches on authenticity; the real-life approach and the interactional ability approach. 'Real-life(RL) approach' tries to develop tests that mirror the 'reality' of non-test language use. This approach has been considered as naive because the test setting itself does not exactly resemble its real-life setting (Spolsky, 1985). Also "this approach does not distinguish between language ability and the context in which this ability is observed, since non-test language performance constitutes the criterion for authenticity and the definition of proficiency" (Bachman, 1990: 302).

In the second approach, the authenticity of language tests arises from their 'situational' and their 'interactional' authenticity. 'Situational authenticity' refers to the relationship of features of the test method to particular features of the target-use situation. 'Interactional authenticity' mentions the extent to which an examinee's language ability is engaged in the test task. Thus, the emphasis in this model shifts from "attempting to sample actual instances of non-test language use to that of determining what combination of test method facets is likely to promote an appropriate interaction of a particular group of test takers with the testing context" (Bachman, 1990: 317).

Assessment can be used to improve instruction and help students take control of their learning (Bostwick and Gakuen, 1995). Accordingly, it is also necessary to briefly examine 'backwash effect' as a concept.

### 2.3.5 Backwash effect

This term describes the effect of testing on teaching: "Assessment should be supportive of good teaching and have a corrective influence on bad teaching" (Hughes, 1989:2). Backwash can be harmful or beneficial. Positive backwash happens when students study and learn those things which teachers intend them to study and learn (Hartley and Sporing, 1999). On the other hand, negative backwash means the converse. For example, if teachers measure writing skills only through multiple-choice items, then there will be pressure to practice such items, rather than writing itself. In this case, the backwash would be negative.

Bachman (1990) highlighted that positive 'backwash effect' will result when the testing procedures reflect the skills and abilities that are taught in the course. Hartley and Sporing (1999) support the rationale and validity of assessing students communicatively who have been taught communicatively. By assessing communicatively, teachers would expect the backwash to be beneficial. If teachers wish students to learn to

communicate effectively in a variety of practical situations, teachers should test them on these skills. This conscious feedback loop between teaching and testing, in terms of content and of approach, is a vital mechanism for educational development (Bostwick and Gakuen, 1995).

### 2.3.6 Elicitation

The key to effective oral proficiency testing lies in matching elicitation techniques with the purposes and constraints of the testing situation. In the case of school-related speaking assessment, tests are usually brief and consist of a single elicitation procedure (Madeson, 1980).

There is a great range of test types, depending on the content of instruction. For example, some tests use a simple question and answer procedure to assess communicative matters such as amount of information conveyed, comprehensibility, appropriateness of vocabulary, and fluency. Other formats include the guided interview, evaluation during group interaction, oral reports, dialogues and role-play, skits and drama. While the latter five are high in communicative face validity, they are difficult to assess with any consistency (Madeson, 1980).

### 2.3.7 Scoring

The techniques for eliciting speech samples must be linked with appropriate scoring procedures (Madeson, 1980). The decision as to whether to use a global or specific scoring procedure depends on the purpose of the test (Jones, 1977).

There are two contrasting ways of grading student speech; holistic scoring and objectified scoring. Holistic scoring concentrates on communication and tends to be selected when the teacher evaluates a wide variety of criteria simultaneously. The limitation of holistic scoring is that some teachers find it confusing to evaluate many things simultaneously (Bachman, 1990); it may be only those teachers with considerable experience and training who can use holistic scoring effectively.

On the other hand, specific scoring procedures attempt to identify smaller units such as appropriateness, fluency, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Objectified scoring (Bachman, 1990) can be used by teachers with little specialized training and by highly trained teachers who prefer evaluation which is consistent and easy to use. For most teachers, objectified scoring is a practical alternative. However, it is possible to lose perspective of the overall performance. Even on a speaking test with objectified scoring, it is good to indicate a very general impression of a student's performance. This can be done simply by an indication that the person is "high", "mid", or "low". The general rating can verify the teacher's objectified score (Bachman, 1990).

### 2.3.8 Further considerations for scoring

There are three important suggestions on scoring. One is to use a scoring sheet. At the left raters can number the test item. Next to the test number is a short version of the cue. At the right are at least three boxes for raters to check- the first for 2-point answers, the next for 1-point responses, and the next for "0" or unacceptable answers (Bachman, 1990).

Another suggestion is to score the speaking test immediately if possible. Usually the scoring of a speaking

test is more accurate when it is done during the process of the test itself. So if they feel comfortable testing and scoring at the same time, it is recommended that teachers handle both together. Usually, however, it is difficult for teachers to handle both. The alternative method is to determine the score immediately after the test has been administered (Jones, 1977). Furthermore, an interviewer should not be seen making notes about an interviewee's performance, either during the interview or any other time (Hughes, 1989). If the examiner is making notes during the test, it can distract the examinee and create unnecessary anxiety (Nagata, 1995).

The third suggestion is that if the resources are available, the ideal method is to have an examiner and a scorer present during the test. The examiner can administer the test, while the scorer, located in a place so that he or she cannot easily be seen by the examinee, can record the information for the score (Bostwick and Gakuen, 1995). Hughes (1989) also recommends that a second tester be present for an interview. This is because the difficulty of conducting an interview and keeping track of the candidates' performance.

## 2.4 Teachers' perceptions

It is generally perceived that oral testing is difficult (Jones, 1977) and it is a perplexing problem for many language teachers (Nagata, 1995). Li (1998) found that the main obstacles cited by Korean English teachers included a lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments. According to him, the Korean teachers found it disconcerting that there were no prescribed, ready-made assessment tools for communicative competence. Korean teachers also found it difficult to balance content and language when scoring an oral exam (Myung-sook, 1995, cited in Li, 1998). Some obstacles had little to do with pedagogical issues, but included large classes and a lack of time to conduct speaking assessments (Min-ju, 1995, cited in Li, 1998).

It seems that teachers need to have assistance and encouragement in trying communicative assessment. The accurate measurement of oral ability takes considerable time and effort to obtain valid and reliable results. Nevertheless, where backwash is an important consideration, the investment of such time and effort may be considered necessary (Bachman, 1990).

This chapter has discussed the literature which supports the rationale and validity of using communicative speaking assessment and shows the practical constraints in conducting communicative speaking assessment. Communicative speaking assessment can be difficult and expensive. However, teachers should always remember that it is not impossible (Bachman, 1990). In any attempt to improve education, teachers are central to changes (Frymier, 1987). Teachers are the end users of a classroom innovation. Teachers' perceptions are a crucial factor in the ultimate success or failure of that innovation (Kelly, 1998). Therefore, the study investigated Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers' perceptions of speaking assessment.

The methodology of the study will be outlined in the next chapter.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### 3.1 A qualitative approach

This study used a qualitative approach. According to Wiersma (1995), qualitative research investigates the complex phenomena experienced by the participants by examining people's words and actions in descriptive ways. Qualitative research uses the researcher as the data collection instrument and employs inductive analysis (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The researcher operates in a natural setting (Wiersma, 1995). Also, McDonough and McDonough (1997: 53) say, "qualitative research usually gathers observations, interviews, field data records, questionnaires, transcripts, and so on".

In this study, two qualitative data collection instruments were used: 'a questionnaire' and 'semi-structured interviews' with teachers.

According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), questionnaire research is popular among educational researchers in general and ELT research in particular. McDonough and McDonough (1997: 171-172) state the advantages of questionnaires as follows:

- \* The knowledge needed is controlled by the questions, therefore it affords a good deal of precision and clarity.
- \* Questionnaires can be used on a small scale, in-house and on a large scale, requiring little more extra effort than photocopying and postage.
- \* Data can be gathered in several different time slots: all at once in a class, in the respondents' own time as long as it is easy to return, at convenience when a suitable respondent happens to come along, and in different locations at different times; but in all of these the data is comparable, the questions are the same and the format is identical.
- \* Self-completion questionnaires allow access to outside contexts so information can be gathered from colleagues in other schools and even other countries.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with some of the participants because "the interview is a very good way of accessing peoples' perceptions" (Punch, 1998: 174). As well, the interviews were considered a method of triangulation, a "checking out the consistency" (Patton, 1990: 464) of the data obtained from the questionnaire responses. Further, it was believed that such triangulation of data may yield factors not mentioned by the participants in the questionnaire (Punch, 1998). McDonough and McDonough (1997: 184) remark 'a semi-structured interview' is regarded as "being closer to the qualitative paradigm because it allows for richer interaction and more personalized responses".

### 3.2 Steps in the selection of participants

One of the aims of this research, as stated earlier, was to investigate Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers' perceptions of speaking assessment.

#### 3.2.1 Questionnaire participants

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered to ten English teachers who were working at ten Busan

Junior Secondary Schools (Years 7-9) in Korea. These teachers agreed to participate in the research project while they were attending an English teachers' workshop at the Busan Teachers Training Centre. Permission was gained from the Director of the Busan Teachers Training Centre, Korea to distribute the questionnaire.

Two males and eight females responded to the questionnaire. Table 1 shows that the participants ranged in age from 24 to 43 years, with the majority in their 30s. The participants' experience in teaching English ranged from one to twenty years. At the time of the data collection, four were teaching 7th grade students, two were teaching 8th grade students and three teachers were teaching 9th grade. One teacher was teaching both 7th grade and 9th grade students. All participants had experience in conducting speaking assessment in Junior Secondary Schools.

Table 1  
Background of Questionnaire Participants

Teachers	Age	Gender	Years of teaching experience	Grades taught	Type of school	Highest degree completed
Teacher 1	24	F	1	7	Co-educational	BA
Teacher 2	32	F	9	8	Boys' school	BA
Teacher 3	33	F	12	9	Girls' school	BA
Teacher 4	34	F	11	7 & 9	Girls' school	BA
Teacher 5	36	M	10	7	Girls' school	BA
Teacher 6	36	F	13	9	Boys' school	BA
Teacher 7	38	F	16	8	Boys' school	BA
Teacher 8	42	F	20	7	Girls' school	BA
Teacher 9	43	F	20	7	Co-educational	BA
Teacher 10	43	M	16	9	Co-educational	BA

### 3.2.2 Interview informants

Six of the ten respondents to the questionnaire volunteered to be interviewed, and of these, four were ultimately selected for interview by following "Patton's maximum variation sampling" (cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 200). The researcher considered maximum variation in participants' age, gender, teaching experience, teaching setting, and grades taught. It was decided that teachers of all grades (7-9) must be represented in the group of interview informants and as well, that equal numbers of male and female teachers and teachers in Boys' schools, Girls' schools and Co-educational schools should be included. Two other parameters, informants' age and years of teaching, were also included to ensure as much variety as possible. In this way, four teachers who were representative of the ten original participants were selected for interview (See Table 2).

Table 2

## Background of Interview Informants

Participants	Age	Gender	Years of Teaching experience	Type of school	Grade taught
Teacher 2	32	F	9	Boys' school	8
Teacher 4	34	F	11	Girls' school	7 & 9
Teacher 5	36	M	10	Girls' school	7
Teacher 10	43	M	16	Co-educational	9

### 3.3 Data collection

The research was carried out using a questionnaire and in-depth interview method.

Firstly, in an attempt to develop an appropriate survey instrument for this study, a pilot questionnaire was administered to five English teachers who were attending a workshop for English teachers in Busan. The pilot questionnaire served to identify those items which were unclear, repetitive, and unnecessary.

The final version of the questionnaire (Appendix A) included both one open-ended question and questions with fixed alternatives generated from the data collected in the pilot survey (Lee, 1998). It asked for opinions on speaking assessment as well as the teachers' professional, educational, and personal background. The questionnaire was written in Korean to ensure complete understanding of the items by the teachers.

The responses to that questionnaire were gathered, as outlined in 3.2.1, from ten Junior Secondary School English teachers. After they had received an explanatory statement and signed consent forms, it was explained that their participation in the project was entirely voluntary.

After analysis of the questionnaire responses, four participants were chosen for interviews on the basis of maximum variation in age, gender, teaching experience, teaching setting, and grades taught. These four were invited to be interviewed so that their perceptions of speaking assessment could be further explored.

Before the interviews with the four participants, a pilot interview was conducted with an English teaching colleague to ensure that the questions were motivating, precise, and clear (Denzin, 1989). The four individual interviews helped to collect more private interpretations of the participants' experience and opinions. According to Punch (1998: 178), such interviews may have the characteristic of "understanding the complex behavior of people without imposing any a priori categorization which might limit the field of inquiry". The interviews were semi-structured and conducted in a systematic order, but sometimes digressed from the prepared and standardised questions. All the interviews were conducted in Korean so that both the interviewer and participants might understand more easily. Each interview lasted ten to fifteen minutes and was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The interview questions were translated into English afterwards

(Appendix B).

### 3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is not a simple description of the data collected but a process by which the researcher can bring interpretation to the data (Powney & Watts, 1987). Wiersma (1995: 216) suggests that

Qualitative data analysis requires organization of information and data reduction. Thus, the researcher is required to reorganize and select related information from disordered, unorganized and discursive data. After all, analysis in qualitative research is a process of successive approximation toward an accurate description and interpretation of the phenomena (Wiersma, 1995: 216).

The themes and coding categories in this study emerged from a thorough examination of the data. They were not determined beforehand and not imposed on the data (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). The researcher repeatedly read through the completed questionnaires and the interview transcripts. As a consequence, recurrent themes and salient comments were identified based on the ideas provided by the participants and interview informants. In this process content analysis was performed by first listing the range of responses by the participants, and then grouping common features and recurrent themes. These themes were then subsumed under three main categories. Using this information, Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers' perceptions of speaking assessment were identified.

The findings from the analyses of data will be discussed in Chapter Four.

## Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, which were conducted as described in the previous chapter.

### 4.1 Overall findings

From the responses of the participants to the questionnaire, it was found that all the participants were conducting speaking assessments at least once a year in their classrooms. However, they expressed frustration at the speaking assessment tasks in use and at the ways they conducted assessments of students' communicative competence in their classrooms. Almost all were using speaking assessment tasks which did not reflect authentic interaction between themselves and their students. They also reported that they were not ready enough to construct and administer communicative speaking assessment.

Analysis of data revealed three main categories.

- (1) Types of speaking assessment tasks used by Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers.
- (2) The teachers' perceptions of speaking assessment
- (3) The practical constraints on the teachers in conducting speaking assessment to assess students' communicative competence.

### 4.2 Types of speaking assessment tasks used by Korean Junior Secondary Schools.

The speaking assessment tasks reported by the Korean teachers based on the completed questionnaires are shown in table 3. These responses will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Table 3  
Speaking assessment tasks used by Korean teachers

	Let the students pick up one or two questions	Show and tell	Self-introduction or family introduction	Role play	Rote memory of text dialog	Picture description	Information gap activity
Teacher 1	v	v	v	v			
Teacher 2	v	v	v	v			
Teacher 3	v	v	v	v			
Teacher 4	v	v	v	v		v	
Teacher 5	v	v	v	v			
Teacher 6	v	v	v	v	v		
Teacher 7	v	v			v		
Teacher 8					v		
Teacher 9					v		
Teacher 10	v				v		
Number of Responses(N=10)	8	7	6	6	5	1	0

#### 4.2.1 Let the students pick up one or two questions in the question box containing many questions.

The responses of eight participants to the questionnaire indicated that they used speaking assessment tasks which gave the students less burden and so helped to lower the affective filter (Krashen & Terrell, 1984). Because students' impromptu responses were not expected from this task, teachers announced questions, topics and tasks in advance so that students could prepare their answers. Students were asked to select and answer one or two questions from a question box. The teachers mentioned several advantages of this type of task.

This task is related with listening. Though teachers announce interview questions in advance, only when students can understand teachers' questions, they can respond. This allows interaction between a teacher and the students (Teacher 4).

This task can give the students motivation to study language functions to be covered in the textbook. Though students are asked to answer one or two questions by the teacher, they need to prepare for more answers. They don't know which questions are to be asked of them because there are many questions in the question box (Teacher 10).

This task allows a teacher to elicit students' responses, though their responses were not impromptu. I guess it is close to authentic speaking assessment task, compared with other tasks similar to memory test (Teacher 2).

#### 4.2.2 Show and tell

This type of assessment task was used by seven participants. For this task, students were asked to bring real objects such as pictures and their favorite personal belongings to the classroom from home. Then they showed them to the teacher, and described them in English.

As this type of task did not need the teachers' English speaking proficiency and elicitation, the teachers' role was that of a scorer only rather than that of an interviewer. The teachers had only to score students' performances on the basis of their degree of preparation.

It's good to elicit students' utterances. Anyway, they have to describe about something in English. As a teacher, my role is to score their performances. Students are interested in this task (Teacher 4).

#### 4.2.3 Self-introduction or family introduction

Six participants used self-introduction or family introduction. This task was used particularly by the participants who were teaching 7th grade students probably because of the requirements of the syllabus at that level.

I guess this task is good for the beginners of English. Above all, topics are familiar to the students. Students can cope with this task easily. Students' participation is active (Teacher 5).

#### 4.2.4 Role- play

With respect to role- play, six participants reported that they used role- play.

Teachers have only to give situations. Students need to make their own dialog with their partners. Then they have to memorize their scripts. This task can't be done by only one student. So it is good for students' cooperative learning (Teacher 4).

This task needs interaction between the students. From the perspective of validity, it's close to authentic speaking assessment tasks (Teacher 2).

On the other hand, Teacher 5 expressed a different opinion.

This task can be beneficial for the students who are good at acting. Sometimes I find it difficult to balance students' action and language proficiency when scoring speaking assessment (Teacher 5).

#### 4.2.5 Rote memory of text dialog

Five of the ten participants mentioned that they used rote memory of text dialog for speaking assessment task.

Rote memory of text dialog is not an effective task for speaking assessment, I guess. But I don't know about effective speaking assessment tasks for my students in Korean classroom. My students like this task because they don't feel burdened. They have only to memorize text dialog. Students are highly motivated by the fact that it's much easier to get good scores than other tasks (Teacher 10).

When Table 3 is compared with Table 1 (showing the ages of the ten teachers), it can be seen that rote memory of text dialog was not used by teachers under the age of 36. This finding suggests that younger teachers, perhaps because of more recent training and qualifications, did not view rote memory of text dialog as a useful type of assessment to speaking tasks.

#### 4.2.6 Picture description

Only one participant used picture description. She was teaching 9th grade students in Korean Junior Secondary School. She said:

Though it takes much time to elicit students' responses, I think it's an authentic speaking assessment task. When this task was given to the students, their responses were different and creative. Above all, this task elicits students' impromptu responses. It is not kind of a memory test (Teacher 4).

#### 4.2.7 Information-gap activity

None of the participants used this task.

Students have a very small English vocabulary and limited number of structures. They don't have the necessary proficiency in English. So students feel very worried about this task, I guess (Teacher 2).

I am short of time to conduct speaking assessment for 38 students within 45 minutes. Students have much hesitation in doing this task. As a rater, I easily become irritated when students don't give prompt reply. For the time-saving I don't prefer this task, though I know it is an authentic task for speaking assessment (Teacher 5).

### 4.3 Teachers' perceptions of speaking assessment in Korean Junior Secondary Schools

#### 4.3.1 Teachers' perceptions of the necessity of speaking assessment

Almost all the participants (nine out of the ten) had positive attitudes towards the necessity of speaking assessment. Interview informants viewed speaking assessment as a necessary part of curriculum.

Speaking assessment is necessary for the students. Students tend to be motivated by assessment or examinations (Teacher 10).

On the other hand, one participant gave a different opinion to the necessity of speaking assessment in the Korean EFL classroom context.

I wonder speaking assessment is needed for the beginners of English in Korean Junior Secondary Schools. Though they began to learn English at the Primary school for three years, students in the EFL context have very limited proficiency of English speaking. It is very difficult for a teacher to elicit students' responses for speaking assessment. I hope that speaking assessment will be conducted when the students reached the 9th grade students (Teacher 4).

#### 4.3.2 Teachers' perceptions of validity of speaking assessment

When the researcher probed the participants' perceptions towards authenticity of speaking assessment by asking if they assess students' communicative competence, nine participants mentioned that speaking assessment did not assess students' authentic communicative competence.

Though I use interview format, it is sort of students' memory test. There is no interaction between me and my students. I, as a rater, score students' monolog on the basis of their preparation (Teacher 2).

For the convenience of construction and administration, I prefer time-saving assessment tasks. They are not related with assessing students' authentic communication ability (Teacher 10).

Students' responses are not impromptu because time for preparation is given for rehearsal (Teacher 5).

### 4.3.3 Teachers' perceptions of reliability of speaking assessment

All the participants expressed that they had little confidence in ensuring reliability of scoring. The concept of reliability has been paid little attention by the participants. All the participants reported assessing speaking alone. Interview informants mentioned:

We have teachers' conference to establish common standards. But it is not related with ensuring higher reliability. This conference is held for assigning the numbers of students to certain scores not to make significant differences between classes (Teacher 2).

It is difficult for me to consider validity of speaking assessment. It is more burdensome for me to conduct speaking assessment if I am required to consider reliability (Teacher 5).

### 4.3.4 Teachers' perceptions of professional development opportunities towards speaking assessment

For the questions asking about the professional development opportunities in speaking assessment, two participants reported having opportunities for in-service education. Most respondents, though, had not had such opportunities. Teacher 10 explicitly expressed his frustration.

I want to learn effective and efficient method on the assessment. There are several courses for the purpose of improving English teachers' speaking proficiency and teaching skills in the Teachers Training Centre. But I have seldom heard of a training course for speaking assessment at the Teachers Training Centre since I started teaching (Teacher 10).

While one participant who had an opportunity for retraining complained.

I had a training about speaking assessment for two hours when I was taking a course for the 1st degree teaching certificate course at the Busan Teachers Training Centre. The purpose of this course is to retrain teachers who elapsed five years of teaching after they entered into teaching. Speaking assessment was taught a piece of knowledge for us to remember, not to use it in class. It was theoretical. Even lecturers admitted it (Teacher 5).

Three participants reported that they referred to research studies published in countries where English is taught as a second language (ESL). Their general perceptions were that these research studies could not meet the needs of the teachers in the Korean EFL context.

I sometimes get ideas from ESL research studies. But considering the Korean classroom situation, I still hesitate to try them. I can't ignore reality such as large classes and excessive work in addition to face-to-face classroom teaching (Teacher 4).

Speaking assessment tasks presented in research studies are too difficult for my students in the EFL context (Teacher 5).

#### 4.3.5 Teachers' perceptions of 'backwash effect' of assessment on teaching.

In response to the question asking if they had considered 'backwash effect' of speaking assessment in planning and designing later classroom instruction, all the participants answered no. That is, assessment was not used to improve instruction and help students take control of their learning. One interview informant expressed his opinion about it.

I know teaching and assessment are interrelated. Actually speaking, assessment tasks are not tied to the instructional goals of my syllabus from time to time. I have never thought of 'backwash effect' of speaking assessment on teaching (Teacher 5).

To sum up, speaking assessment has not been conducted by the Korean teachers in this study from the perspective of language use and communication. The questionnaire responses of teachers indicated that they were not satisfied with the types of speaking assessment tasks and the ways they conducted speaking assessment. Teachers perceived that "oral interview with the students are the best task for assessing students' oral proficiency (Teacher 4)". However, they expressed frustration that communicative speaking assessment tasks suggested for ESL contexts were not suitable for the Korean EFL classroom context.

#### 4.4 Teachers' perceptions of the practical constraints in conducting communicative speaking assessment

Table 4 summarizes the major constraints identified by ten participants for not conducting speaking assessment to assess students' communicative competence in Korean Junior Secondary Schools.

Table 4  
Major constraints identified by Korean teachers

	Large classes	Excessive work in addition to classroom teaching	Lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments	Difficulty in eliciting students' responses	Difficulty in ensuring reliability	Teachers' low English proficiency	Students' low English proficiency	Few opportunities for retraining
Teacher 1	v	v	v	v	v		v	v
Teacher 2	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Teacher 3	v	v	v	v	v		v	v
Teacher 4	v	v		v	v		v	v
Teacher 5	v	v			v		v	v
Teacher 6	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Teacher 7	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Teacher 8	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Teacher 9	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v

Teacher 10	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Number of Re-sponses (N=10)	10	10	8	9	10	6	10	10

#### 4.4.1 Difficulties caused by the educational system

##### Large classes

Each class in Korean Junior Secondary Schools consists of 38 students. One teaching period lasts 45 minutes. Thus, teachers have many students in one class and it takes a long time for one teacher to finish even one round of individual oral tests. All ten respondents referred to large classes as one of the principal constraints on their attempts to assess students' communication ability.

I have to assess 38 students within 45 minutes. I find it very difficult to assess students' communicative competence with so many students in one class. If I consider students' hesitation time for appropriate responses, it will take four or five days to finish one round (Teacher 5).

##### Excessive work in addition to classroom teaching

Ten participants identified excessive work in addition to classroom teaching as a great obstacle to assess students' communication ability. All the participants were overloaded. Any additional work was a burden and stress itself for Korean teachers.

I have four lessons every day as an English teacher. I have to take care of my students as a homeroom teacher. I need to cope with students' problems promptly. As a vice-director I have to make urgent documents and report them to the Regional Education Board in time after supervisor's permission. Around 4 o'clock in the afternoon, I have to deliver special lectures to the students who failed in the mid-term exam. I am already overloaded (Teacher 5).

How I wish I could devote myself to only teaching. I want to be a good English teacher, trying new methodology in my class. But I am losing my identity as a teacher. I guess I am an office worker, rather than a teacher (Teacher 2).

There is one joke among teachers in Korean Junior Secondary Schools. First version was that I can't teach well because of lots of paper work. Second version is that I can't do paper work well because of teaching. I exist for doing paper work in my school (Teacher 10).

I am discouraged from trying innovations regarding teaching. Teachers eager for teaching tend to have disadvantage for promotion. I am demotivated by the fact that teachers who are good at non-teaching jobs are easily promoted (Teacher 5).

## Few opportunities for retraining

Ten participants felt that there was inadequate training for teachers on conducting speaking assessment. The lack of training in conducting speaking assessment was initially a deterrent for Teacher 10 (at 43, the oldest participant in the study) to use authentic communicative speaking assessment.

I don't know about diverse speaking assessment tasks to assess students' communicative competence (Teacher 10).

This finding seems to indicate that additional training, particularly for those whose initial teacher training is not recent, is necessary if they are to be expected to introduce new ways of assessing speaking in the classroom.

The in-service workshop that one participant attended dealt mostly with the theoretical aspects of speaking assessment, not with the practical, pedagogical aspects. Teacher 5 expressed the view.

Theory and practice is two different things. There is big gap between theory and practice. I also feel frustrated by the reality which doesn't allow me to conduct authentic speaking assessment for my students (Teacher 5).

### 4.4.2 Difficulties caused by the students

#### Students' low English proficiency

All ten respondents reported that one important difficulty preventing them from conducting speaking assessment to assess students' communicative competence was their students' low English proficiency.

Students have very small vocabulary and limited structures. Students studied English once a week for three years when they were students in the primary school. So they feel burdened by speaking assessment based on impromptu interaction between a teacher and the students because of their limited English proficiency. So teachers announce questions, tasks in advance for the students to prepare for answers (Teacher 4).

### 4.4.3 Difficulties caused by the teachers

#### Teachers' low English proficiency

Six participants reported that teachers' low English proficiency would limit their assessing students' communicative competence.

If I have a good command of English, it is much easier to elicit students' utterances and measure their communicative competence level. I have no confidence in spoken English. I have difficulty in judging grammaticality and acceptance of students' unexpected responses (Teacher 10).

On the other hand, one respondent expressed a different opinion.

I am not a fluent speaker of English. Students' English level is not so high. I think my English is good enough to assess students' communicative competence (Teacher 4).

#### Difficulty of eliciting students' responses

Nine of the ten participants referred to elicitation as a constraint.

There are several elicitation techniques. In the case of Junior Secondary School, teachers are using only one task for speaking assessment. Questions are designed to ask for routine and typical answers. So it is difficult to elicit various responses (Teacher 4).

#### Difficulty of ensuring reliability

Ten respondents cited reliability in scoring as a constraint on their attempt in authentic speaking assessment.

I am not a native speaker. I don't have native speaker intuition about grammaticality and social appropriateness of students' responses. I have 38 students to be assessed. So I can't assign one student enough time to judge their communicative competence. I am scoring after listening to students' two or three responses. I don't trust my subjective judgments on students' communicative competence. I sometimes feel guilty (Teacher 10).

This chapter illustrated the findings from the analyses of data. The discussion will be organised around the themes identified in this chapter.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **5.1 Teachers' perceptions of speaking assessment**

#### The ways of speaking assessment in the Korean classrooms

As Bostwick and Gakuen (1995) state, assessment can be used to improve instruction and help students take control of their own learning. That is more likely to be accomplished when assessment is authentic and tied to the instructional goals of the program. However, in this study it seemed that the speaking assessment conducted by Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers did not reflect authentic interaction between the teacher and the students. Firstly, teachers did not elicit students' responses as an interviewer. As a result, there was no face-to-face communication between the teacher and the students. Secondly, teachers announced questions and tasks in advance, even though, according to Morrow (1977), communication is unpredictable in both form and message. Thirdly, students' responses were not impromptu but rehearsed because of the predictable nature of tasks.

#### The types of non-authentic speaking assessment tasks

Several types of such non-authentic speaking assessment tasks used by Korean teachers were identified through this study. Firstly, teachers used speaking assessment tasks which gave the students less

psychological burden. As beginners in English, many students in Korean Junior Secondary Schools had a very small vocabulary and a limited number of English structures. Thus, they found assessment of their speaking by the teacher to be very stressful.

Secondly, teachers tried to lower students' affective filter (Krashen and Terrell, 1984) by minimizing the effects of unpredictable factors and anxiety. "Performers with optimal attitudes have a lower affective filter" (Krashen and Terrell, 1984:38). It will encourage students to interact with teachers with confidence. Korean students felt intimidated by unfamiliarity with the test type. And also lack of preparation for the test seemed to lead them not to reflect in their performance the best that they are capable of.

Thirdly, teachers used time-saving speaking assessment tasks designed for the convenience of construction and administration because they taught large classes for relatively short periods of time and were already overloaded with excessive work in their school. They felt burdened by speaking assessment.

Lastly, teachers used the speaking assessment tasks which did not demand them to take the role of an interviewer. Such assessment tasks helped teachers function as a rater only, scoring students' responses on the basis of their promptness and the degree of preparation.

#### Teachers' perceptions of theory of speaking assessment

This study also indicated that Korean teachers were not equipped with an adequate theory of communicative speaking assessment. As a consequence, the teachers had little confidence in conducting speaking assessment. Nor had the 'backwash effect' of assessment on teaching been perceived by the teachers in designing speaking assessment. As Bachman (1990) highlighted, positive 'backwash' will result when the assessment procedures reflect the skills and abilities that are taught in the course. However, speaking assessment in Korean Junior Secondary Schools appeared not to be tied to the instructional goals in content. As a result, it was a 'one-off' as one-time test only.

Inter-rater reliability makes an important contribution to test reliability. According to Bachman (1990), rating should be concerned with enhancing the agreement between raters by establishing explicit guidelines for the conduct of rating. However, Korean English teachers were scoring alone. They did not concern themselves with inter-rater reliability. Though they held teachers' conference regarding speaking assessment, inter-rater reliability was not an important issue for them.

#### Teachers' perceptions of the practical constraints in conducting communicative speaking assessment

In addition, this study revealed the practical constraints in conducting authentic speaking assessment in the contexts of the Korean EFL classroom and educational system. Most of the teachers in the study appeared frustrated by the big gap between theory and practice. Participants mentioned constraints in conducting communicative speaking assessment, such as large classes and time-consuming, excessive work in addition to classroom teaching, lack of training in conducting speaking assessment, lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments, difficulty in eliciting students' responses. Consequently, most of the teachers

simply did not venture to try communicative speaking assessment while others gave it up after a brief try.

### Teacher's personal belief

However, another factor was shown to be important in determining the use of communicative assessment, that of the teacher's personal belief in trying new ways of communicative speaking assessment, and willingness to persist, despite the practical constraints of Korean EFL classrooms. One teacher, when responding to the questionnaire indicated that she used picture description to elicit students' responses and endured the students' hesitation in making their appropriate responses.

### 5.2 Suggestions for conducting communicative speaking assessment

This study showed that Korean teachers agreed with the necessity of speaking assessment because it motivated students (It was shown in Chapter 4.3.1). Most teachers expressed a strong desire to learn how speaking assessment can be effectively and efficiently administered in the Korean EFL classroom context. Thus, teachers need to have assistance and encouragement in trying new ways of communicative assessment. Continuing support for teachers who may need help with communicative assessment is important. This can be achieved by conducting in-service teacher education programs, in which teachers have opportunities to retrain and refresh themselves in communicative speaking assessment. More importantly, teachers need to receive assistance in changing their educational theories and attitudes.

This study also brought out another factor that may be specific to Korean English teachers; Korean teachers were overloaded with excessive work in addition to classroom teaching. It was revealed that Korean teachers were frustrated and infuriated by this reality of Korean Junior Secondary Schools. If this situation is to be relieved, educational administrators need to show greater sensitivity to the teachers' complaints of excessive workload and to reflect teachers' point of view in their decision- making.

One of the major reasons which teachers gave for not conducting communicative speaking assessment was the perception that the speaking assessment tasks suggested for ESL contexts could not meet needs of learners in Korea. Thus, it is suggested here that Korean teacher researchers develop their own appropriate version of the communicative speaking assessment suitable for their EFL classroom situations.

Korean teachers need to be aware of the shift in social and educational needs. All the teachers in Korean Junior Secondary Schools are now required, by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, to conduct speaking assessment in their English language classes. Therefore, teachers need to make conscious and persistent efforts to introduce more communicative speaking assessment into their classrooms and to be equipped with some measurement tools to evaluate their students' oral proficiency.

It is believed that teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of a communicative assessment innovation in the Korean EFL context are crucial in determining the ultimate success or failure of that innovation. As Frymier (1987) mentions, teachers are central to changes in any attempt to improve education.

Compared with CLT in Korean Junior Secondary Schools, communicative speaking assessment has received little attention among Korean Junior Secondary Schools. However, the interdependence of

communicative teaching and communicative assessment should not be ignored by the Korean teachers.

This chapter contained discussion about the themes identified in Chapter Four. Next chapter will set out conclusion of the study and suggestions for further study.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

### 6.1 Research aims

As stated in the introduction, this study aimed:

1. to identify the types and the ways of speaking assessment used by Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers;
2. to investigate Korean teachers' perceptions of the practical constraints in Korean EFL classrooms which affect assessment of speaking.

### 6.2 Results

In terms of question 1

the study found that Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers did not assess students' oral proficiency from the perspective of language use and communication. This fact was reflected in the types of speaking assessment tasks used by the Korean English teachers and in the ways they conducted speaking assessment.

Several types of such non-authentic speaking assessment tasks used by the Korean teachers were identified through this study.

1. Korean teachers used speaking assessment tasks which gave the students less psychological burden.
2. Korean teachers tried to lower students' affective filter by announcing tasks in advance to minimize the effects of unpredictable factors.
3. Korean teachers used time-saving speaking assessment tasks designed for the convenience of construction and administration.
4. Korean teachers used the speaking assessment tasks which did not demand the teacher to take the role of an interviewer.

In conducting speaking assessment, Korean teachers were not equipped with an adequate theory of speaking assessment. For example, they seemed not to be aware of 'backwash effect' (Bachman, 1990) of testing on teaching, of inter-rater reliability and of the necessity to be trained in the application of assessment criteria through rigorous standardisation procedures. As a consequence, Korean teachers had little confidence in conducting speaking assessment.

From the investigation of question 2

This study revealed the practical constraints in conducting communicative speaking assessment in the Korean EFL classroom context and the Korean educational system. Participants reported such constraints as

- \* large classes
- \* excessive work in addition to face- to- face classroom teaching
- \* lack of training in conducting speaking assessment
- \* lack of effective and efficient instruments
- \* difficulty in eliciting students' responses

The findings of this study suggest that educational administrators need to show greater sensitivity to the teachers' complaints of excessive workload and to reflect teachers' points of view in their decision- making. Also, teachers need to have assistance and encouragement to try new ways of communicative assessment in their Korean EFL classrooms. This can be achieved by conducting in-service teacher education programs. Furthermore, Korean teachers need to make conscious and persistent efforts to introduce more communicative speaking assessment in spite of practical difficulties. They need to be aware of the shift in social and educational need. The researcher believes that teachers are the end users of an innovation. Their perceptions of the feasibility of a communicative assessment innovation is crucial in determining the ultimate success or failure of that innovation (Li, 1998). Teachers are central to changes in any attempt to improve education (Frymier, 1987).

### 6.3 Limitations of the study

The most obvious limitation of this study is the small number of participants. Because of this, the findings cannot be generalised to other Junior Secondary School English teachers in Busan, nor to the wider Korean context.

Another limitation is the fact that the interview participants volunteered to participate. Therefore, researcher interviewed only those who were already interested in conducting speaking assessment.

The third limitation is that during the interviews the participants might have been influenced by interviewer's framing of interview questions. Accordingly, the quality of the data generated might be affected by the experience, skills and commitment of the interviewer (Kumar, 1996).

### 6.4 Suggestions for further study

This study sought to explore the Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers' perceptions of conducting communicative speaking assessment. Future studies need to be conducted which are of practical benefit to Korean teachers. Such studies could explore the use of prescribed, ready-made speaking assessment tools suitable for the Korean EFL classroom context. As well, studies could explore the

correspondence between the convictions expressed by teachers of the use of communicative assessment and their actual use of such assessment in their classrooms.

## 6.5 Contribution of research

This investigation of Korean Junior Secondary School English teachers' perceptions in conducting speaking assessment is a valuable contribution to a little studied issue. The findings will help to raise the teachers' awareness of the rationale for and validity of teaching and assessing communicatively. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings will provide Korean English teachers with the impetus to carry out communicative speaking assessment in spite of the practical constraints in the EFL classroom context. Also, it is hoped that the findings will assist in raising the awareness and sensitivity of educational administrators to teachers' claims of excessive workload with the result that teachers' points of view will be reflected in policy and decision-making.

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