The Effects of Training on In–Service Teachers’ Perceptual Changes of TEE

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This study focuses on the experiences of in–service teachers during a TEE (Teaching English in English) training course and analyzes how their perceptions regarding teaching a course in English have changed within a semester. Thirteen in–service teachers who were enrolled in a TEE training course at a graduate school were interviewed in order to obtain a better understanding of their perceptions. The results showed that their initial concerns were mainly about speaking English when teaching the lessons. In particular, when the teachers were asked about which area they would like to improve, a majority of them answered that they wanted to improve their English skills. However, after completing three teaching demonstrations and getting feedbacks of their demonstrations, the teachers’ concerns shifted toward general classroom management including organization of the activities and interacting with students. The results suggest that there is a need for developing training programs that can provide teachers with a comfortable setting to lower their anxiety in using English as well as providing proper feedback. Some implications are given in terms of developing TEE programs that are more feasible and applicable for English teachers in Korea.

I. INTRODUCTION

When TEE was introduced in 2001, the intention was to enhance students’ communicative competence by means of input from teachers’ use of English in the classroom as well as communicative interaction with students.

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However, after 12 years of its implementation, the definition of TEE still remains blurred and it even seems more like a policy for teachers to improve their English rather than for students to learn English from their teacher’s input (Lee, 2013). With such emphasis on teachers’ use of English, the pressure is on teachers’ English proficiency to conduct the entire class in English. While the policy does not enforce teachers to conduct the class entirely in English, a large number of teachers assume that it is an English-only policy and feel burdened due to their lack of English proficiency (Kim, 2002a; Kim, 2002b; Maeng, 2008). With such perceptions of TEE, teachers often attend in-service TEE training sessions hoping to enhance their English proficiency. While teachers enter such training sessions with their own perceptions of TEE, the administration and the curriculum of such training courses conduct the class with predetermined lessons without providing opportunities for teachers to reflect on where they are coming from in terms of their perceptions, beliefs, philosophy, and practices. There may be short-term effects as a result of training; however, when their perceptions remain the same before and after the training, such training effects are unlikely to last very long. As such, when the intentions of the policy, the perceptions of the teachers, and the goals of the training courses all regard TEE differently, the effects of training may not be significant. In order to find out what the teachers’ experience during their TEE training session in terms of their perceptual changes of TEE, this study focuses on what the teachers’ perceptions of TEE are before and after the training course and what factors contribute to their changes in perceptions if there are any.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Teachers’ Perceptions of TEE

After its implementation, TEE has forced teachers to readjust their lessons according to the policy, which claims that it promotes communicative competence by means of using the target language to interact. In fact, the TEE evaluation tool developed by Imm, Chang, Lee, and Lee (2011) mainly focuses
on observing the teacher's lesson goals, types of interaction, and organization of activities and only allows a very small percentage of the tool to evaluate teacher's speaking proficiency. Other TEE evaluation tools also consider the teacher's English proficiency as a small portion of the large picture, which is effective teaching and classroom management (Jin, Lee, and Cho, 2009). However, teachers have been so preoccupied by the notion that they have to use English to teach that they have magnified this ability as the decisive factor in successful implementation of TEE. Kim and Kim (2004) found out that teachers have the greatest foreign language anxiety when they have to teach English through English. According to Horwitz (1996), this type of anxiety can have a negative effect on foreign language instruction. The questionnaire conducted by Jeon (2008) shows that teachers' perceived lack of English proficiency and their lack of knowledge about TEE implementation were obstacles that made it difficult to teach their classes in English. Jeon (2008) claims that teachers' conceptual understanding of TEE does not yield its implementation in the classroom. In another study, Im and Jeon (2009) found out that lack of knowledge in proper methodologies, lack of preparation time, and low proficiency as their major difficulties in teaching English in English. In particular, the teachers in their study explained that while they acknowledge the importance of using the target language in the classroom, the policy seems to be enforced upon them without considering the classroom settings and limitations such as large class size and overwhelming amount of materials to cover. Findings in Lee (2007) shows that despite negative perceptions of TEE reported in previous studies (Kim, 2001; Kim, 2002b; McGrath; 2001), teachers perceive using English positively when carrying out tasks such as checking comprehension, greeting and complimenting as effective. Teachers in Lee (2007) expresses that TEE is less effective when carrying out some tasks such as teaching grammar or explaining reading materials. Similarly, Kim (2002)b found out that teachers tended to avoid using English when explaining grammar, disciplining, and giving instructions for test whereas using the target language for greeting, complimenting and giving instructions for routine class activities was highly preferred.
2. Effects of TEE Training

Studies that explored the effectiveness of the training program mostly reported that teachers improved their language proficiency and teaching skills. However, they mainly focus on the black-and-white aspect (i.e., whether or not there was improvement) rather than the factors that contributed in such improvements. Yang (2009) reports that teachers gained confidence as a result of their language improvement. The teachers were also shown to have incorporated diverse activities as a result of their training. However, whether or not they acquired a proper knowledge of TEE is not provided by the results. Furthermore, the teachers seemed to have emphasized their enhanced language ability, which could suggest that they regard English ability as a major factor in TEE. Kim (2009) also shows that a domestic TESOL training program was effective in TEE skills, however, since the data were collected by means of an online survey, it is difficult to examine the qualitative aspects of the program's actual effectiveness.

In a different perspective, Kim (2002, p. 343) points out the following issues regarding TEE in Korea:

1. English-only policy in TEE classes is not realistic in Korean context.
2. Teachers are encouraged to speak English but also consider judicious use of L1.
3. Simply using the target language does not mean successful teaching; proper classroom techniques and procedures are required.
4. There is a need for raising the teachers' awareness of their teaching.

The present study is in line with the conclusions drawn by Kim (2002), especially her third point, in which the researcher believes that "English" is not everything to TEE; there is much more involved in allowing students to develop their communicative competence. Accordingly, rather than focusing on the effectiveness in general, this study attempts to provide an in-depth view of the teachers' perceptual changes of TEE before and after the training sessions along with the factors that produced such changes.
III. METHODOLOGY

1. Participants and Data

A total of 13 (2 male and 11 female) in-service teachers who were enrolled in the TEE training course taught by the researcher at a graduate school in Seoul participated in this study (See Table 1). All of the participants were secondary English teachers and were taking the TEE training course for the first time. The participants are referred to under pseudonyms in this study for the purpose of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

<Table 1> Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Gender</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changmin (M)</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanghyuk (M)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyunsook (F)</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeonhee (F)</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soyoung (F)</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minjung (F)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yelim (F)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jisu (F)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahye (F)</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanmi (F)</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jieun (F)</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nayeon (F)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seohee (F)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants were required to do four teaching demonstrations during the semester, which were videotaped and analyzed by the instructor. For each of the demonstrations, participants received written feedback from the instructor and peers of their demonstrations. The instructor videotaped the demonstrations and gave detailed feedback in terms of their activities, classroom management, and teacher talk. They were also given written feedback from their peers after the demonstration. The lectures consisted of analyzing various types of ESL theories within EFL context and reflection sessions on the demonstrations and feedback. Semi-structured interviews
(Merriam, 1998) were conducted three times during the semester following the Three-Interview series (Seidman, 1998) in which the researcher met the participants three times during the semester and asked questions that were suitable at that particular phase: before the training sessions began, six weeks into the training course, and the last week of the training course. During the first interview, the participants were asked about their general background information regarding their experiences and perceptions of TEE. The participants were asked about their perceptions during the second and third interviews to observe any changes. The duration of each interview session was about 30 to 40 minutes and the interviews were conducted in Korean then translated by the researcher. Table 2 shows the main interview questions for each session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Session</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>1. What difficulties have you had when you conducted the class in English?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. What do you expect to improve from this training course?</td>
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<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>1. What difficulties are you having in your TEE demonstrations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. What are your major reflections during the reflection sessions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>1. Are there any differences between your perception of TEE before and after the training session?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. What do you think are the influential factors that caused such changes?</td>
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</table>

2. Analysis

This study adapted the "constant comparative data analysis" (Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to search for relative data and connect "categories by comparing incidents in the data to other incidents, incidents to
categories, and categories to other categories" (Creswell, 2005, p. 406). The researcher transcribed the interview sessions, summarized each student's responses, and searched for prominent concepts, themes and events within the data. Specific concepts that have been sorted out were then put together under a newly formed category and examined together to search for a core category. As a result, the researcher was able to identify major themes and factors related to the teachers' perceptions of TEE. In order to establish trustworthiness in the interpretations of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the data were analyzed by two debriefers and conducted member checking via e-mail to verify the interpretations of the data.

IV. FINDINGS

1. First Interview: "I'm worried about my English"

1) Anxiety about English

The first interview was conducted during the first week of the class. The questions were about their perceptions of TEE to find out what views they were bringing in to the classroom as well as their expectations of the course. When the participants were asked about what their thoughts were regarding TEE, most of them responded that speaking English was the major obstacle in conducting their classes.

Even though I have a great lesson all set up before the class, once I begin teaching in English, everything just seem to fall apart. (Seohoo)

Some of the participants complained that speaking English even hinders their rapport with their students with whom they have an amiable relationship when Korean is spoken.

I feel very distant from my students when I speak English. I just can't seem to be able to interact with them using a foreign
language. I'm not used to speaking English in the classroom and switch to Korean when I see my students in the hallway. It's simply awkward. (Minjung)

Many teachers made the same claims as Minjung that using English creates an identity that they are not used to and make them feel uncomfortable. Planning the lesson was found to be another problem when the class is conducted in English since the participants had to prepare for their classroom English. One of the participants admitted that her students' high proficiency level pushes her to make perfect productions.

It's double the work when I have to teach in English. Some of my students have studied abroad and have a better proficiency than me. That makes me nervous. I don't want to make mistakes in front of my students so I have to prepare in advance what I need to say. (Jisu)

Similar to findings in Maeng (2008), many participants expressed their anxiety of making mistakes and students' negative evaluation of their spoken abilities. As shown by the participants responses, they tended to define TEE as simply "using English" and considered speaking English as a burden and even a distraction in their teaching.

2) English as the solution to TEE

All of the participants responded that a successful class depended on their speaking proficiency. In other words, they had the tendency to regard "high proficiency in English" as the key to TEE. Due to the participants dependency on their speaking proficiency in English, their expectations of the TEE training course was mainly about improving their English skills.

At the end of this course, I really hope I can improve my English so I can teach without anxiety. (Hyunsook)
Similar to Jung and Chang (2009), the participants expected an improvement in their language proficiency as a result of the training sessions. The participants also responded that an improved proficiency would solve all problems in their lessons.

*If I become familiar with classroom English, I think my lessons will work out as I planned.* (Changmin)

As a result of their perception of TEE as adding spoken English onto their existing lessons, the participants’ expectations of the course were mostly toward improving their English skills and assumed that their newly-improved proficiency will make their lessons better.

2. Second Interview: “What affects my teaching?”

1) Reflection on their own learning experiences

The second interview was conducted six weeks into the course. At this time, all of the participants had completed two teaching demonstrations and received feedback from the instructor and peers. When they were asked about what their thoughts were regarding TEE as they were going through the training course, most of them compared their perceptions they had before the course and the perceptions that are in the process of forming at the point of the interview. In particular, many of them reflected on how they were taught when they were in secondary school.

*My high school teacher never smiled! So, it’s hard for me to smile and act friendly because I feel like I’m entertaining them and not really teaching something.* (Yeonhee)

*I know that I’m supposed to build some kind of rapport with my students and began the class with a bit of a chat. But I’m really not used to that. If my teacher began the class with small talk, I think I would have felt awkward.* (Jieun)
Like Yeonhee and Jieun, most of the participants were taught by stern teachers who rarely had interactions with their students. This finding is similar to that of Ahn (2008) in which teachers have the tendency to teach as they were taught. Their identities and perceptions of teaching seemed to have been shaped by their own teachers. The participants' instructional practices were also shown to have been affected by their own learning. One of the main topic was classroom interaction. Since they were taught without interaction, this seemed to have affected their own teaching practices.

*These days, English kind of stands out among the other major course like Korean and Math. But when I was a student, it was just like the other classes. The teacher wrote down everything on the board, we copied, and we memorized.* (Sanghyuk)

From their reflections, it can be suggested that their identities as teachers had been affected by their own teachers and the clash between such identities and the type of teaching TEE seems to demand had made them feel uncomfortable and awkward.

2) Reflection on their own teaching practice

Many of the participants reflected on their teaching practice as a result of the newly formed awareness of their teaching practice from the feedback of their teaching demonstrations. During this stage, the participants were beginning to realize that there are many other factors involved besides their English proficiency when their lessons do not work out as planned. The participants mostly mentioned that they were confused about their perceptions of activities.

*I don't think I thought much about the activities since I used the ones in the textbook. I thought I didn't explain the activities because of my English proficiency, but now that I think about it, I think I just didn't know how to explain, in any language.* (Yeonhee)
I thought that all I need to do for pre-reading activity was introduce new vocabulary. I never thought about helping them get interested in the reading since I wasn't that much interested in the reading material myself. It was just a text to show them examples of sentence structure, not really a text that has meaning, like novels. (Chanmi)

The participants' sole reliance on the textbook and their lack of understanding of pre-, during-, and post-activities were shown to have affected their teaching practice. In addition, the participants also mentioned their difficulties in giving directions. Initially, they had blamed their lack of English proficiency. After they had been given feedback, however, they began to see that the problem was in their organization of the activities.

I thought that doing a lot of fun activities would get my students motivated and interested in learning. But when I got the feedback that my activities were not related to my teaching goals and were even disorganized, I was shocked! (Yelim)

I didn't know my activities were so complex. I always had trouble explaining the activities and I thought I was my English. Now I'm beginning to think that my lessons didn't work well because the activities were simply confusing. (Seohee)

At this stage, the participants were beginning to see factors other than their English for some of their failures in their lessons. The driving force for such realization seemed to have been the feedback they had received from the instructor and their peers as well as self-monitoring by watching the recording of their teaching demonstrations.

3. Third Interview: “It’s all about great teaching and interactions”

1) Redefining TEE
The final interview took place one week after the final class. They were asked what their perceptions of TEE had been like and whether there had been any changes from the ones they had before the course. Most of the participants responded that they had misconceptions about TEE.

*I thought it was all about my English, but now I think it's much more than that. Actually, when I was doing my final teaching demonstration, English was the last thing on my mind. I was mostly focused on presenting my activities in an organized manner, checking whether my pre-, during-, and post-activities are well connected and many others related to teaching my lessons effectively.* (Dahye)

*I think I had pointed my finger at the wrong thing. It's kind of embarrassing to admit this, but I think I lacked understanding of how to teach and didn't see that because I was so fixated on my English proficiency.* (Jisu)

Like Dahye and Jisu, most of the participants acknowledged that the other factors were overshadowed by their foreign language anxiety caused by their misconception of TEE. Their responses are in line with the claim made by MacIntyre, Noels, and Clement (1997) regarding the negative effects on language anxiety which force learners to focus on their perceived lack of ability and the potential failure rather than the task at hand. There were, however, a few participants who were still worried about their English skills due to low proficiency and lack of experience in conducting the class in English.

*I'm still not sure about teaching my lessons in English. I don't know why I have to speak English when I can do a better job in Korean. They learn from my explanations, not from my English. I'm simply not ready.* (Sanghyuk)

For those with the threshold level English proficiency, using English still
seemed to cause anxiety and even reject the policy. In regards to such teachers, language proficiency will always “represent the bedrock” of their professional confidence (Murdoch, 1994, p. 254).

2) Factors that encouraged reflection

Since most of the participants’ perceptions had changed by means of reflection during the course, the participants were asked what had encouraged such a change. Most of the participants pointed out that feedback from the instructor and the peers helped them see things in different perspectives as well as notice certain aspects.

*At first, the feedback I got was pretty shocking. But it made me think about my teaching habits a bit more carefully and forced me to ask myself many questions, like “Do you think your students actually learned something from your lesson?”* (Soyoung)

*I had no idea that my lessons were so disorganized. I think that’s because I rarely looked through my lesson plans carefully. I felt pressured to cover everything in one lesson, so I didn’t pay that much attention to organization. If I hadn’t been evaluated, I would never have known. That would have been bad.* (Minjung)

Some of the participants responded that the reflection sessions during the course such as defining one’s teaching philosophy, analyzing own learning background, finding rationale for own teaching practices had helped them consider influential factors more carefully.

*There really wasn’t anything that was systematic about my teaching. During my first years of teaching, I taught my students as I was taught at school, and as time passed, I just finished one lesson after another without really much reflection. After all*
these years of teaching, I’m ashamed to admit that I don’t have a rationale for what I do in the classroom. (Nayeon)

By means of feedback and opportunities for various types of reflections, the participants were able to redefine their perceptions of TEE as well as reflect on where their initial misconceptions had come from.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The participants in this study perceived TEE as teachers “using” English in the classroom and were not aware of the other factors such as interaction and activities as influential. The findings of this study indicate that teachers bring in various types of perceptions regarding TEE before the training sessions; thus, the findings emphasize the importance of a proper understanding of their perceptions prior to the training sessions. The participants noticed a gap between what they know about TEE and what is actually involved in TEE through various teaching demonstrations, feedback, and reflection sessions. Such perceptual changes occurred as a result of different perspectives given to them after instructor and peer evaluations as well as opportunities to share their views during the reflection sessions. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that perceptual changes of TEE can occur by means of training, given that proper feedback and reflections accompany it.

The participants’ initial misconceptions of TEE suggest a need for a clear definition of TEE by the Ministry of Education. As Jo (2011) pointed out, TEE should be defined in light of the EFL situation in Korea (Min & Jung, 2000). Rather than pushing an English–Only policy, which seems to magnify teachers’ foreign language anxiety, it should focus more on an “English–please” policy in which teachers are encouraged to use both Korean and English strategically (Auerbach, 1993; Boo, 1998; Dash, 2003; Liu et al., 2004; Lucas & Katz, 1994; Wigglesworth, 2002.) The training sessions should also consider using more in-depth methods rather than surface-level training to encourage reflection and apply maximal usage of various types of feedback (Jeon, 2012; Na, Ahn, & Kim, 2008; Paek, 2009; Park, 2008) as
well as consider follow-up training after the actual training session to maximize and prolong the effects (Chang et. al., 2010).

REFERENCES


Key words: TEE, teacher training, perceptions, foreign language anxiety

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