Hongik University Freshman English Course

Problem Analysis

What problems are you trying to address?

The problem being addressed in this course is the lack of skills, strategies, and experience for successfully communicating orally in English and interacting with foreigners in academic and social settings. **Actual:** Government, business and industry, as well as Korean society as a whole regard the ability to orally communicate in English as a highly valuable skill, and to that effect invest more than most other countries, spending tens-of-billions of dollars a year on English education. However, contrary to beliefs and expenditures, Korea ranks as one of the lowest achieving countries in the world when it comes to learning English (Korea Times, 2009). **Optimal:** Students would use skills and strategies for learning and speaking in English that would make them more effective at communicating confidently and effectively in academic and social settings, giving them a higher return on their investments of time, effort and money.

What are the symptoms of the problem?

Symptoms of the problem include avoiding speaking and situations which may require speaking; a lack of confidence which leads to shyness; continued usages of ineffective methods of learning leading to wasted time and ineffective results; scattered and disorganized knowledge of the English language; loss of motivation to speak and learn English; and continued or increased feelings of xenophobia.

What is the root cause of the problem?

The root causes for most of these problems are threefold: a general social xenophobia of foreigners; an historically poor methodology for teaching English in the K-12 setting which focuses primarily on the study of grammar and text, utilizing a transmission of knowledge model of learning (for subjects other than English as well); a social stigma which views the speaking of English as an exotic skill to be both envied and despised.

Is instruction an appropriate solution for the problem?

Yes, but not more of the same. Instruction must involve students in speaking in English, and engaging the language without fear of making mistakes. Further, classes being led by foreigners, of any nationality, would help to break the cycle of xenophobia (generally a non-belligerent shyness).

Is WBI an appropriate instructional solution?

It can be an appropriate solution. One of the main problems is that students are generally good at passive text-based English activities - much of what WBI uses. However, they don’t need more of that. They need interaction which uses oral communication. So, students would need to be engaged in many oral and audio communication activities such as using
audio and video chat and listening and responding orally to audio and video files. A blended learning environment would likely be most effective.

**Instructional Goal Statement**

At the end of this instruction, participants will be able to:

- Comprehend university-level English texts and discuss the content with both native and non-native English speakers at a beginner level\(^1\).
- Socialize orally in English with both Korean people and foreigners, confidently and effectively
- Utilize skills and strategies for effectively learning and speaking English

**Standards Being Addressed**

There are two sets of standards that this project is aligned to: TESOL for the ESL aspect of the course and ISTE for the technology component of the course. The following TESOL standards are met in this course:

**Goal 1 → Communicate in social settings:**

*Standard 1:* Students will use English to participate in social interactions

*Standard 2:* Students will interact in, through, and with spoken and written English for personal expression and enjoyment

*Standard 3:* Students will use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence

**Goal 2 → Achieve academically in all content areas:**

*Standard 1:* Students will use English to interact in the classroom

*Standard 2:* Students will use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form

*Standard 3:* Students will use appropriate learning strategies to construct and apply academic knowledge

**Goal 3 → Use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways**

*Standard 1:* Students will use the appropriate language variety, register, and genre according to audience, purpose, and setting

*Standard 2:* Students will use nonverbal communication appropriate to audience, purpose, and setting

*Standard 3:* Students will use appropriate learning strategies to extend their sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence

The following ISTE standards will be met by the course:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISTE Standard for Students</th>
<th>Standards this course will meet</th>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 1 → Creativity &amp; Innovation</td>
<td>a, b</td>
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<td>Standard 2 → Communication &amp; Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 5 → Digital Citizenship</td>
<td>b,c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 6 → Technology Operations &amp; Concepts</td>
<td>a, b, d</td>
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\(^1\) The term beginner level refers to the level of an English conversation course, which is an elective course. It is a likely next-level course if students choose to continue their English studies.
**Contextual Analysis**

**Organizational infrastructure**

The resources at Hongik University are quite extensive, particularly when you consider the resources available beyond the campus in the community. The campus has at least six fully equipped general computer labs with 100mb fiber-optic connections, departmental computer labs, student lounge and club computer access as well as terminals scattered across the campus in hallways and dining areas. There is also a WiFi network that all students, faculty and staff can use with netbook/notebook computers. Surrounding the university there are numerous “PC Rooms” which have high-powered computers as well as accessories including scanners, video-chat capabilities and more- all for $1 an hour and available 24-hours a day 7-days a week. All labs have a technical support worker who is part of a larger network of support which includes both professional and student staff members. From personal experience, most problems can be resolved relatively quickly.

There are a variety of classrooms across campus varying in the amount of technology in them and ranging from nothing more than a chalkboard to laptop-networked display and digital lectern systems. In the General Studies department, classrooms for English instructors fall into three categories: those with nothing more than a whiteboard/chalkboard; those with projector and screen but no digital lectern; and fully equipped digital lectern classrooms. There are no classrooms with computers for student usage other than general computer labs. However, students can use WiFi with their own personal notebooks in any of the classrooms.

The university has a computer and technology center which has several functions. They provide technical support, set-up and maintain equipment and networks, and manage and develop the University e-learning system, Mediatopia, as well as the university website and Classnet, a university intranet primarily used for posting grades, registering for classes, and viewing personal accounts such as transcripts and payments. Teachers and students can also communicate via email and Q & A boards, post assignments and handouts and some other basic functions. The system is of limited use to many of the foreign English instructors due to the fact that it is almost completely in Korean and there are few opportunities for learning how to use them.

**Allocation and competencies of personnel and resources**

All aspects of the proposed course will be designed, developed, implemented and revised on an individual basis and will have little-to-no outside support. Access to the university’s e-learning system Mediatopia is not possible at this time and requires going through a complicated review and approval procedure; new courses can only be submitted for consideration in October of each year, for the following spring semester. There is, however, access to the university’s server, which requires filling out a simple form and submitting it for approval; however, this form is currently only in Korean and would require assistance in

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2 **There are over 26,000 Pc rooms in Korea, each with anywhere from 20 to 100 powerful state-of-the-art computers with high speed internet.**
translating it. The amount of space allotted is “unlimited.” There would be no Technical support for the development of the site itself and would be limited only to issues of accessing the server. Ownership of the resources on the site will remain the instructor’s, though in the future, these resources may used to build a full online e-learning course for implementation using Mediatopia, at which time ownership may be turned over to Hongik University.

Approval for a blended course is not required so long as the required textbook is used, classroom schedule is followed, regulations in regard to attendance and testing are complied with and the general purpose of the course is fulfilled. However, notification to the dean of the department is recommended.

In regard to alignment with goals and objectives, generally they are vague and broad, leaving interpretation ultimately up to the instructor. In this course I will be aligning with standards set by ISTE for technology usage and TESOL for ESL learning.

**Learner location and technology**

Students will be located on-campus and live in the local area. Students will have to own a cell phone and have access to computers any day of the week and in the evenings at times. They must also have access to and at least a basic knowledge in the use of Internet Explorer, Wikis, video chatting, file uploading and downloading, audio and video recording and compressing, MS Word and PowerPoint.

**Learner Analysis**

**General Characteristics**

There will be between 6 and 12 participants in this course. The students are generally all Korean and between the ages of 18 and 20, with some older students who are retaking the class. The classes are of mixed genders, though sometimes classes may be all boys or all girls. Sometimes classes are designated a science-major-only course, meaning only students with majors such as engineering, math, urban design, and biology can be in this course-excluding social science and humanities students (this is due to a recent accreditation review). Their English oral communication levels vary, but are mostly very low. Grammar and reading comprehension skills vary more than oral communication skills.

**Motivations**

The course is a General Studies requirement which is graded, so students will be motivated to pass the course, particularly students who are taking the course for the second time, of which there are always a few.

**Prior knowledge**
Students should know the basics of computing such as Word Processing, file management and Internet usage. They should also have broad knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar, which most students generally do.

**Communication Skills**

Students need to be effective in their reading and writing skills. Their skill level should be on a post-secondary standard where they can read and follow through on given instruction. Their writing skills should be on a post-secondary level so they can communicate clearly with other students and the instructor.

**Technical Knowledge and Skills**

Students almost all have a great deal of experience and comfort with technology, particularly the usage of digital cameras, mp3 players, computers, cell phones and Korean websites, though they’ve generally not used a Wiki nor know of Wikipedia. All own a cell phone and predominantly one which has camera, video and mp3 player functions. Many even have video phoning and internet browsing capabilities, but are reluctant to use such functions because of the higher cost.

They mostly have very little experience using English websites and generally only access Western sites that have a Korean homepage, such as Google. Also, they have almost never used a browser other than Internet Explorer, which they are quite proficient in using, and probably have not heard of Mozilla or Opera, due to the fact that Korean websites use so many Active-x controls. Many, but not all of them have used MS Word, but prefer the Korean version called *Hangeul*; many have used PowerPoint to make presentations. Many of them don’t have MS Office on their personal computers, though they know where they can get access to it. Overall, access to required technology is not a major issue. Required skills, which many students may lack, such as the use of Wikis, will be demonstrated by the teacher and will be supported through tutorials on the course site.

**Abilities and disabilities**

This course, being heavily focused on learning oral communication skills, would not be appropriate for a hearing impaired student. For those using screen readers, the site will use ‘alt’ tags for images which make the screen reader pick up necessary meaning in documentation. For those who may be color blind or have other visual impairments, the site will use recommended colors and contrasts and will allow the text size to be changed. There will also be a variety of learning methods so that different learning styles will all be accommodated.

**References**