

# **English Curriculum in Korean Medical Colleges**

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The importance of English as a global language is more emphasized than ever as it is the most sought for language in the world. As for doctors, a good command of English is considered a prerequisite in order to be competent in the medical profession. The current study is to understand the present English education in Korean medical colleges by reviewing the data of 41 medical colleges all over the country in the years 1998 and 2002. The study shows that the average of 169 hours of English are taught for Korean medical students. Geographically speaking, Gyeonggi area is known to be the top province in terms of English study hours. National universities offer the average of 78 hours of English whereas private colleges provide almost three times as much, 194 hours of English. The most popular English courses in medical schools are medical English and conversational (or practical) English. All 4 skills of English are to be taught as this group of learners learn the language to read English textbooks, to write papers, and to be fully prepare for international medicine.

## **1.0 Introduction**

English in Korea is used as a method of access to advanced science and technology as well as a means of promotion in many sectors of business and corporation. As the competitiveness in the global world in terms of international trade and exchanges in academia increases drastically, some of the nations like Korea, the so-called expanding circle as Kachru (1981) categorizes, revise the English education curriculum emphasizing more on communicative skills.

Moreover, medical schools in Korea place an emphasis on English as an important part of the curriculum since their study involves with extensive English textbook reading and medical professionals need to write papers or at least abstract in English. Such emphasis holds especially true among the recently established schools primarily because the slogan of these institutions is "intensified (or fortified) English program" for their students' English competence. The catch-phrase of these medical colleges is to cultivate proficient speakers of English that are to be fully ready for the ever competitive academic world.

Understanding of medical students' specific needs should be a basis for the adequate curriculum. It will be insightful to know what English classes are currently provided for medical students, how many hours of English are offered in most medical

colleges, and if such curriculum is adequate to teach the skills the learners specifically need.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the curriculum and syllabus design of English in Korean medical colleges. The year 1998, in which the researcher began teaching at the current institution and more importantly the 7th curriculum for the secondary school started, will be analyzed for the study. The data of 1998 will be compared with those of 2002 to see if there is any change in the English curriculum.

## **2.0 Literature Survey**

English today is the pre-eminent example of a language which is learned for instrumental and functional reasons (Li, 2002; Spolsky, 2002). And it is the main channel of international communication in science, medicine, and business, and dominates new media such as the Internet (Crystal, 1997). For millions of people around the world English is associated with modernity, with wealth, and with political, social and professional success (Mitchell, 2003). As Brumfit (2002) states, the English language is increasingly seen as the language of global success, the power of the Internet binds those with sophisticated technology closer and closer to each other, and the forces of world economy create conditions in which minority languages and cultures, in a pure form, are increasingly felt to be insufficient for personal survival by some of their members.

According to Phillipson (1992), the spread of English was a result of linguistic imperialism, 'the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages' (p. 47). He argues that linguistic imperialism is a special kind, distinct from the six imperialisms proposed by Galtung (1980) which are economic, political, military, communicative, cultural and social.

Spolsky (2002) brings up two issues that need to be considered. The first issue is whether linguistic imperialism is separate and distinct from the general phenomenon attacked variously as modernization, westernization, globalization, Americanization (Bourdieu, 2001). The second is whether we can find good evidence supporting Phillipson's notion that the basis for the spread of English was that the core English-speaking countries and their governments, or some effective combination of countries and governments have been successful in the asserting and maintaining the dominance of English.

It is noticeable in the recent curriculum that the communicative ability is greatly emphasized as a good command of English is essential to compete successfully in the modern marketplace. With such a growing necessity to study English for practical purposes worldwide, Korean Ministry of Education came up with the 7th curriculum in 1997 for secondary English education that emphasized more on the communicative skills.

The secondary English curriculum showed some differences between the 6th and 7th curriculum according to Chang (2001). Students were to be taught with an emphasis on communicative skills. College English also seemed to reveal the importance of communicative aspect. The recent titles of college English courses showed such trend with names like conversational, communicative, or practical English.

English curriculum for medical students may be different from other majors for their specific purposes. Language policy on such specific group of learners should focus on what they need for their major or career in the future.

The syllabus design plays an important role in any level of curriculum and textbooks. A number of studies included definition of syllabus design. Corder (1975) described it as "it is more than just an inventory of items." McKay (1982) stated that "a syllabus provides a rationale for how content should be selected and ordered." And Wilkins (1981) expressed as "syllabuses are specifications of the content of language teaching which have been submitted to some degree of structuring or ordering with the aim of making teaching and learning a more effective process." Yulin (1983) defined the syllabus design as "it is the language syllabus that determines what is to be taught and also, to a considerable extent, when and how it is taught. The syllabus provides the foundation on which curriculum developers, material writers, teacher trainers, examiners and of course teachers base their work." (The above quotations of three researchers are from Chang's (2001) study).

For the syllabus design, three key developments in teaching may be developed: needs-based programming, competency-based language teaching, and genre-based language teaching. Needs-based programming is an approach to language program development in which teachers analyze the needs of their learners and negotiate language learning objectives with them. In competency-based language teaching, learning outcomes are described in terms of performance criteria and what a learner can do at the end of a course. Genre-based teaching focuses on the abilities, knowledge, and skills that learners need in order to participate in particular spoken and written genres (Paltridge, 2003).

### **3.0 Methods**

#### **3.1 Data**

Currently, there are total of 41 medical colleges in Korea. The study is to see what policies these colleges have on English, what skills of English are emphasized in the curriculum, and how many hours of English are taught throughout their premedical education curriculum. For the research, *Korean Medical Colleges' Education* for the years 1998 and 2002 was referenced. Each college's syllabus was studied to learn of its English curriculum. One particular school in Kangwon area did not respond regarding their English curriculum so obtaining information on that institution was not possible except for a visit to the school. As the visit was not feasible, this particular institution

was excluded from the study.

### 3.2 Method

The curriculum and syllabus of the medical schools in Korea for two different years were studied though some syllabuses were no available. They were numbered from 1 to 41, however, no information was available on the third institution, and listed in the order of Korean alphabet, ga-na-da. The first two years of each curriculum was studied and listed on the master sheet to see the types and total hours of the courses. Then their courses and hours, total credits were listed to be compared between 1998 and 2002.

### 4.0 Results And Discussions

The study shows that Korean medical colleges have their students study the average 169 hours of English during the so-called premedical education period, the first two years. The years 1998 and 2002 were compared to see if their curriculum showed any difference. There was an overall increase in the hours of English study by 10 hours from 164 in 1998 to 174 in 2002. The following table shows names, hours of credits, and hours of English course, and differences in hours of each medical college for both years.

TABLE 1. English Courses of Medical Colleges in 1998

No. School	Name of Course	C	H	TC	TH	TC	TH	DIFF
1. Gacheon	98 Practical English I & II	2	128					
	Medical English I & II	2	80	4	208			
	2002 Everyday English 1	2	64					
	Everyday English 2			2	64			
	English for Academic Purposes I	2	64					
	English for Academic Purposes II	2	64					
	English Classic Seminar	2	32					
	English & Medicine	1	45					
	Listening to Medical Media			1	16		12	349
+ 141								
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2. Catholic	98 English	8	128					
	English Conversation	4	64					
	English Special	P/F	60	12	252			
	2002 English	8	120					

		English Conversation	6	90					
		English Special	P/F	60	14	270			+ 18
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3.	Kangwon	No Data							
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4.	Geonkook	98 English I & II	4	96					
		Practical English & Practice	3	48	7	144			
	2002	Practical English & Practice	3	64			3		64
									-80
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5.	Konynag	98 English Reading I & II	4	64					
		English Communication I - IV	8	128					
		Medical English	2	32	14	224			
	2002	English Communication I - III	6	96			6	96	-128
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6.	Kyungbook	98 English Reading & Listening I	2	30	2	30			
	2002	English Reading & Listening I	2	30					
		Medical English I & II	4	60			6	90	+ 60
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7.	Kyungsang	98 Practical English					2	32	
		Medical English	1	16	3	48			
	2002	Practical English			7	112			7 112
									+ 64
8.	Kyunghee	98 English Conversation I & II					6	96	
		English Composition I	3	48					
		Medical English	1	32	10	176			
	2002	English Conversation I & II			6	96			
		English Composition I	3	48					
		Medical English	1	32			10	176	0
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9.	Kyemyong	98TOEIC I & II	4	64					
		Practical English Conversation	2	32					
		Medical English 1 & 2	4	64					

		TOEFL	2	32	12	192			
	2002	TOEIC I & II	4	60					
		Practical English Conversation	2	30					
		Medical English 1 & 2	4	60					
		TOEFL	2	30			12	180	-12
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10.	Korea	98	General English	6	96				
			Practical English			2	32	8	128
	2002		General English	6	96				
			Practical English			2	32		8 128
0									
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11.	Koshin	98	English Reading	6	102				
			Practical English			5	85		
			Medical English	4	68	15	255		
	2002		English Reading	6	102				
			Practical English			5	85		
			Medical English	4	68		15	255	0
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12.	Gwandong	98	English Lab			2	32		
			English Conversation	2	32				
			College English	2	32				
			Medical English	2	32	8	128		
	2002		English Lab	2	32				
			English Conversation	2	32				
			College English	2	32				
			Medical English	2	32		8	128	+3
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13.	Dankook	98	English Conversation	2	32				
			Intermediate Practical English	2	32				
			Medical English I & II	4	64	8	128		
	2002		English Conversation II	2	32				
			English Conversation III	2	32				
			Practical English			2	32		
			Medical English	2	32				
			English & Ethics 1			2	32		

	English & Ethics 2	2	32		12	192
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+ 64

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14. Daegu Catholic	98	English Reading	2	32		
		English Conversation I - IV		4	128	
		Medical English	1	32		
		English Composition	2	32	9	224
2002		Practical English		3	48	
		English Conversation 1-I, 1-II	2	64		
		Medical English	1	32	6	144 -80

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15. Dongkook	98	Practical English			2	64
		English Conversation	2	64		
		Medical English	4	64	8	192
2002		Practical English I & II		2	64	
		English Conversation I & II		2	64	
		Medical English I & II	4	64	8	192 0

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16. DongA	98	English	8	256	8	256
2002		English	10	224		10 224

-32

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17. Busan	98	English Reading	2	32		
		Practical English I		1	32	
		Practical English II		1	32	4 96
2002		Pan-Pacific English I - IV	4	120		4 120

+ 24

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18. Seonam	98	English I		3	48	
		English II		3	48	
		Medical English I		3	48	
		Medical English II		3	48	12 192
2002		English Reading & Vocabulary	6	90		
		Medical English		2	30	8 120 -

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19. Seoul National	98	English	6	96	6	96		
2002		English	3	48				
		Advanced English			3	48	6	96

0

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20. Seongkyunkwan	98	English Reading	2	32				
		English Conversation I & II			4	64		
		Practical Medical English			2	32	8	128
2002		English Conversation	2	32				
		Practical Medical English			2	32	4	64

64

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21. Sooncheonyang	98	English	4	68				
		Native English	2	68	6	136		
2002		English I & II	4	128				
		English Conversation I & II			2	128		
		English Conversation III	1	64				
		Native English III			1	64	8	384

+ 248

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22. Aju	98	English I - IV	12	168	12	168		
2002		English I - IV	12	192			12	192 + 24

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23. Yonsei	98	English	3	48				
		Practical English 1, 2	6	96				
		Medical English	3	48	12	192		
2002		English	3	48				
		Practical English 1, 2	6	96				
		Medical English	3	48			12	192 0

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24. Yonsei-Wonju	98	English I			3	48		
		English II			3	64		
		Sisa English	3	64				

		Medical English	1	16	10	192			
2002		Basic College English	2	96					
		Beginners' College English			2	96			
		Sisa English	3	64					
		Medical English	1	16			8	272	+ 80
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25.	Youngnam	98			English Reading & Composition	4	64		
					English Practice	2	128	6	192
2002					Practical English Grammar			2	32
					English Reading	2	32		
					TOEIC	2	32		
					English Practice 1 & 2	2	32		
					Practical English			2	32
								10	160
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-32									
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26.	Wulsan	98			English Conversation I & II			4	64
					English I & II	4	64		
					Medical English	2	32	10	160
2002					English Conversation I	2	32		
					English I	2	32		
					Medical English I & II	4	64		
					Practical English I			2	32
								10	160
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0									
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27.	Wonkwang	98			English			4	64
					Practical English			1	32
					Medical English	2	32	7	128
2002					English Conversation	2	32		
					Practical English			4	96
					Medical English	2	32		
								8	160
									+ 32
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28.	Eulji	98			English Conversation	8	136		
					English Conversation Practice	8	272	16	408
2002					English I & II	6	134		
					English Conversation	2	34		

		English Writing	2	51					
		Medical English	2	34		12	253	-155	
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29.	Ewha	98		English I		3	64		
				English II		3	64		
				Medical English Topic	1	16	7	144	
		2002		English I		3	48		
				English II		3	48		
				Medical English Topic	1	16		7	112 -32
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30.	Inje	98		English Reading	2	32			
				English Conversation	7	96			
				Medical English			1	32	
				English Lab	2	64			
				Practical English			3	64	15 288
		2002		English I			3	48	
				English Conversation I	2	32			
				English Conversation II	2	32			
				English II			3	48	
				Medical English			2	32	12 192 -
96									
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31.	Inha	98		English Reading	3	48			
				English Conversation	2	32			
				Medical English & Composition	3	48			
				Basic English Conversation			3	48	11 176
		2002		College English I -IV	8	192		8	192 +16
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32.	Jeonnam	98		English I		3	48	3	48
		2002		English I		3	45		3 45 -3
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33.	Jeonbook	98		English		3	48	3	48
		2002		English		3	48		3 48
0									
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34. Jeju	Verbal English	6	96					
	Medical English			1	16	7	112	
2002	College English	6	96					
	Medical English			3	48		9	144

+ 32

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35. Josun 98	Medical Practice English			4	64			
	English Conversation	2	48					
	General English					2	32	8 144
2002	General English			2	32			
	English Conversation	2	48					
	Medical English	1		3	64			
	Medical English	2		3	48		10	192 -

48

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36. ChoongAng 98	English Prose Reading	2	32					
	English Lab	2	32					
	Medical English			2	32	6	96	
2002	English Prose Reading	2	32					
	English Lab	2	32					
	General English Conversation I	2	32					
	Intermediate General English			2	32			
	General English Conversation II	2	32					
	General Advanced English			2	32		12	192

+ 96

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37. Choongnam	Required English			3	48	3	48	
2002	Required General English			3	48		3	48 0

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38. Choongbuk	English I			2	32			
	English II			1	32	3	64	
2002	English I			2	32			
	English II			1	16		3	48 -

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16

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39. Pocheon	98	English			8	256			
		English Lab	4	128	12	384			
	2002	English 1 - 4	16	512					
		English Lab 1 - 4			4	256	20	768	
+ 384									
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40. Hanlim	98	General English I - IV	8	256	8	256			
	2002	General English I & II	4	64					
		English	2	32			6	96	-160
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41. Hanyang	98	Practical English Conversation I	3	64					
		Advanced English Conversation	2	32	5	96			
	2002	Practical English Conversation I	3	64					
		Advanced English Conversation	2	32					
		Medical English Practice	2	32			7	128	+ 32
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TABLE 2  
Distribution of English Hours in 1998 and 2002

Hours	1998	2002
Less than 50 hours	5	4
Between 51 -100 hours	5	6
Between 101 - the average hours	11	12
Over the average hours	19	18
Total	40	40

As can be seen, there were 19 colleges which offer more than the national average of English hours of curriculum in 1998 and 18 in 2002. The next table shows the distribution of hour changes in 2002.

TABLE 3  
Distribution of Hour Changes in English Curriculum

Hour Changes	No. of Schools	Percentage
Increase	16	40%
Decrease	15	38%
No Change	9	22%

As the table shows, sixteen medical colleges (40%) increased their hours of English curriculum in 2002. Fifteen colleges (38%) reduced English study hours and nine out of forty (22%) maintained the same hours of English. It can be interpreted that there is a need for more hours of English study, however, their medical study requires teaching more hours and credits in medical courses such as anatomy, physiology, biology and organic chemistry during the first two years, and therefore, allotting more hours of English study is not easily feasible in many colleges. The next table shows the geographical distribution of medical colleges to see which area in Korea most emphasizes English study for their medical students by offering more hours.

TABLE 4.  
Geographical Distribution of National & Private Colleges

Areas	No.	N	P	AH'98	N	P	AH'02	N	P		
Seoul	9	1	8	149	96	156	162	96	170		
Gyeonggi			5	0	5	213	0	213	313	0	
Gangwon			3*	0	3	192	*	192	165	0	165
Chungcheong	7	2	5			165	56	208	155	48	198
Gyeongsang	10	3	7			177	58	228	167	107	192
Jeolla	5	2	3			112	48	155	113	47	157
Jeju	1	1	0			112	112	0	144	144	0
Total	40	9	31	164	74	192	174	82	199		

N: National P: Private AH: Average Hours

\* One of the medical schools, national university, in this area was excluded from the study because no information was available on that particular college.

As shown in the above table, the schools in the Gyeonggi area have the English curriculum with the most hours, almost twice as much as the lowest hour curriculum in

Jeolla and Jeju areas. The distribution shows that Jeolla and Jeju have the minimum hours of English curriculum. It may be safe to interpret that the doctors in these areas might think that their use of English as doctors is limited and therefore it is not considered crucial to emphasize the necessity of its study that much.

The following table compares national universities with private ones. There are 10 national universities and the rest are private. Interestingly enough, these national universities offer 74 and 82 hours of English in 1998 and 2002 respectively, which is a lot less than the average of 164 and 174. However, Jeju University was the only national medical college that offers 112 hours of English, whereas all other national universities offer comparably below the average hours. The study shows that the private colleges have extensive curriculum on English.

TABLE 5.  
Differences between National and Private Colleges

Type of College	AH '98	AH '02
National( 9)*	74	82
Private (31)	192	196

\* No Data on Kwangwon leaving 9 national universities.

AH: Average Hours

In terms of syllabus, the most popular courses of the medical schools are English I & II, English Conversation, Practical English, and English Reading. Most of these English courses are inclusive of reading, listening and speaking skills of English. Only a few colleges offer writing classes and about a half of the total colleges teach medical English (21 out of 40 in 1998 and 20 in 2002). The following table shows the names of the courses.

TABLE 6  
Names of the Courses

Name	No in 1998	No in 2002
Everyday English		1
Practical English		14
English I & II	17	15
English Conversation	15	15
English Lab	4	2

English Composition	4	2	
General English	3	4	
English Reading	10	5	
TOEIC or TOEFL		2	3
College English	1	5	
Required English		1	1
Medical English	21	20	
Sisa English	1	1	
Native English	1	1	
English Communication	1	1	
English & Culture		1	2
English Special	1	1	
Verbal English	1		
English & Ethics		1	
Pan-Pacific English			1
Advanced English			1
English for Academic Purposes		1	
English Classic Seminar		1	
Listening to Medical Media			1
English Classic Seminar		1	

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## 5.0 Implications And Conclusion

Most of the medical schools offer reading and conversational English classes along with medical English for their curriculum. The most commonly offered courses in medical colleges are medical English and conversational or practical English. It is obvious that English is being taught for their practical, medical use and it shows that EPS is in demand as university level English. Moreover, as medical students need to write papers in English, their curriculum should consider including such courses so that students can be benefited. If the purpose of learning the language is to communicate with and give medical services to English speaking patients and to write papers, adequate training classes to meet such needs should serve the purpose. Though the majority of hours are devoted to medical studies for this group of learners, a class for a semester or two may not be sufficient to teach the skills they need as future doctors. Therefore, two-year curriculum for English and testing for each skill after a course may be a good measure for a conducive program. It is advised to include practical or conversational English, medical English, and English writing for learners of medicine.

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