

**Maximizing the Positive Effects of the New Korean National English Ability Test (NEAT)  
on English Language Education in Korea through Task-Based Instruction**

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## **Maximizing the Positive Effects of the New Korean National English Ability Test (NEAT) on English Language Education in Korea through Task-Based Instruction**

### **1. Introduction**

Many people in South Korea spend a lot of time learning English because using English has become a significant matter in Korea. The Korean government relies on worldwide trade for its economic development. In addition, the English language is considered an important language tool because it is the pivotal language for trading in the world (Choi 40). Therefore, the English education system in South Korea has been considered the most important way of attaining “social mobility and economic prosperity” (Park 50).

A lot of people spend a great amount of money learning English in South Korea. A Korean newspaper, *The Hankyoreh*, shows that approximately twenty billion dollars was spent on education in 2006, and roughly fifteen billion of that amount was spent on English education. This was an enormous rise compared to the cost of English education in 2001, which was about ten billion dollars (Park 51). Korean parents are willing to spend a lot of their income on their children’s English education. For example, many parents are sending their middle and high school aged children to English private schools until late at night. Some children, who have the opportunity, have been sent to English speaking countries such as America, Canada, and Australia in order to better compete with their peers in Korean schools. This phenomenon of focusing on learning English has been named “English fever” (Park 50-51).

Most importantly, the majority of Koreans spend a lot of time and money on taking English examinations such as the Korean version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), Test of English as a Foreign Language

(TOEFL), and International English Language Testing System (IELTS). According to a report by the Samsung Economic Research Institute conducted between 2004 and 2005, there were a total of 554,943 TOEFL test takers in the world. Out of that total, 102,340 were Koreans (K. Eun-gyong).

Parents also spend a good portion of their time and income on their children's English education, while students put a lot of effort into learning English. However, despite the effort that both parents and students devote to English education, the results from most English tests are low. Park reports that Korean students who took the TOEFL ranked 93<sup>rd</sup> out of 147 countries in 2004 and 2005. This observation shows that "there is a 'high-cost and low - efficiency' in the English education of Koreans" (51). According to the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the ranking increased in 2009: Korean students ranked 71<sup>st</sup> out of 157 countries. However, Koreans did not receive a high enough score on the speaking section in spite of increasing the overall scores. The average score for Koreans on the speaking section of the TOEFL is 19.7 out of 30, and Koreans ranked 121<sup>st</sup> out of 157 countries (K. Mee-yoo).

Another exam that affects Korean high school students is the Korean version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT). Every Korean high school student has to take KSAT when he or she wants to enter a university, and the exam heavily affects his or her plans. This is because students have more high-quality job opportunities depending on the results of the exam, so it is a significant examination. Most students begin studying for KSAT when they enter middle school. There are four sections in KSAT. The verbal, mathematics, and English portions are required. In addition, the students have a choice between a social studies or science for their fourth section. In the English section of KSAT, receptive and expressive abilities are tested. The receptive abilities include reading and listening, and are tested directly. The expressive abilities include

speaking and writing, and are tested indirectly. Because KSAT does not evaluate students' speaking and writing abilities directly in English instruction, most Koreans are less likely to improve their expressive abilities. A strong opinion is presented by Pearson: "It is generally accepted that public examination [has] influenced the attitudes, behavior and motivation of teachers, learners and parents" (qtd. in Bailey 1). These influences on student examination performances are known as washback (or, interchangeably as backwash), which according to Wall and Alderson, can influence classroom environments in both positive and negative ways (qtd. in Bailey 1).

The Korean government has been trying to change English education in Korea for a long time, and because of this, the English educational system has been changing gradually as well. The president of Korea, Lee Myeong Park, promised to reform English education by applying ideas used in immersion programs. For example, these immersion programs give students more time to practice English so that they will have additional exposure to all aspects of the English language. Students are able to have more English speaking content. Another type of reform by the president will be to implement the new National English Ability Exam (NEAT) (Teffeteller).

Given the positive effects of washback, I believe that the new test, with its speaking and writing sections, will influence students positively and help them to improve their English proficiency in these fields. In addition, I will argue that teaching speaking skills required for the NEAT can be done effectively by using a Task-based Approach (TBA). Firstly, I will show how English education in Korea has changed from a grammar-focused system to a communicative-focused one. Secondly, I will explain how standardized English exams such as KSAT, TOEIC, and TOEFL have been carried out all over the world and will point out some problems with these exams themselves. Thirdly, I will explain the effects of both negative and positive washback

through a number of examples. Lastly, I will describe a methodology for preparing for the new exam NEAT through a Task-based Approach (TBA) which can help students improve English proficiency in a communicative way.

## **2. The English education system in Korea**

In order to implement the new standardized exam effectively, it is important to understand how the English education system in Korea has changed from one that is focused on grammar, to one that is focused on communication. A deeper look into the history of the English education system will help us to understand how the tests have affected Korean students' English proficiency.

### **2.1 The history of the English education system**

English education in Korea was first introduced in 1883 at the Tongmunhak School when the Joseon government, ruled by Emperor Kojong, opened an English language school to train interpreters for diplomatic documents. Most of the students were government officials taught by a native speaker of English. The students in the school were also taught all subjects in English. The students learned English through a “kind of Direct Method” in which “no translation is allowed” in the English classroom (Diane Larsen-Freeman 23).

When Japan dominated Korea from 1910 to 1945, English education declined. The Japanese government forcefully closed the Yugyoung Gongwon Foreign Language School in Korea in 1911. During this time, Korean students in high school and college learned English for only two hours a week. Moreover, learning English was banned when World War II started because the Japanese government considered “English as the enemy’s language” (K. Oryang).

After Korea gained its independence from Japan in 1945, Korean society began to be noticeably influenced by America, and English education was naturally revitalized. The Ministry of Education tried to design a new English education system by evaluating the curriculum and methodology of English teachers in Korea. In addition to this, the Ministry of Education began changing the national curriculum, text books, and examinations in Korean schools (K. Oryang).

## **2.2 English education with a grammar focus**

Second language (L2) teachers throughout the world started using the Grammar Translation Method at the end of the nineteenth century, and the method spread around the world by the nineteenth century. Second language learners were taught English “with explicit explanation of rules, with memorization and translations of texts from the (L2) to the [First Language] (L1)” (Nassaji and Fotos 2-3). The first five national English curriculums (1955-1991) for secondary schools in Korea heavily focused on using the Grammar Translation Method. Most Korean students memorized a lot of English vocabulary, idioms, and linguistic forms because they were tested with a written exam that focused on many English rules and words. Some English teachers incorporated the Audio Lingual Method (ALM) alongside the Grammar Translation Method. In a typical example of the Audio Lingual Method, students repeat patterns of English using fixed expressions and focus on pronunciation. If students make mistakes in the patterns or pronunciation, the teachers correct them directly to prevent errors from becoming habits (Nassaji and Fotos 2-3). Most of the students who were taught with these methods did not have many chances to practice spoken English even though they had been learning English for several years. The teachers were more likely to focus on grammar,



structure, and skills because these skills were on the English tests. Although some students received high scores on the English tests, the result of the tests did not show their English proficiency. For example, some students who were good at grammar rules and structures could not communicate with English native speakers. In other words, many Korean students had a difficult time expressing their thoughts and feelings in English even though they had entered one of the top universities or companies based on their high English scores.

### **2.3 English education with a communicative focus**

English communicative proficiency has been stressed in South Korea since 1992, through “government policy changes, social and economic changes and increasing influence of communicative teaching methods in academia” (Park 51). The government realized that the Grammar Translation Method did not help students improve their ability to communicate in English. Therefore, the primary goal of the government’s sixth curriculum (1992 –1996) was Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in English education (Yoon 7). The goal of the CLT approach is communicative proficiency (Yoon 3-4). The South Korean government wanted Koreans to have the ability to communicate with people from different countries. The government hoped its people would be actively participating in political and economic events in the world (Li 681). The CLT approach is different from the Grammar Translation Method and the Audio Lingual Method in that it attempts to help learners acquire language through communication and interaction with others. The general concept of CLT focuses on practical communication in the target language, and some activities like pair work and problem-solving are parts of a CLT classroom (Thompson). Students learn a language with authentic resources because the approach is linked with real-life activities in the classroom. English lessons should

not be teacher-centered, instead they should be learner-centered, focusing on students' wants and needs. The CLT classroom meets these student-centered requirements (Vasilopoulos 2).

The Ministry of Education is trying to achieve a student-centered, communicative environment by proposing a syllabus "with communicative functions such as 'exchanging information,' solving problems,' 'asking favors,' 'expressing feelings,' etc." (Yoon7). However, there are criticisms of the CLT approach because the sixth curriculum in Korea heavily emphasizes fluency while lacking accuracy of grammar in speaking and writing. When the seventh curriculum (1997 to present) was introduced, the developers included additional grammar in the communicative functions for students. According to Kwon, the seventh curriculum is considered "a grammatical-functional syllabus which provides both communicative functions and grammatical structures" (Yoon 7).

However, despite these curriculum modifications, CLT is still ineffective for teaching English in South Korea (Vasilopoulos 1). There are several difficulties caused by teachers, students, the educational system, and the approach itself. These difficulties hinder the success of implementing CLT in South Korean classes, and include a lack of teacher confidence and speaking ability, large class sizes, and insufficient CLT training for teachers (Park 52).

There are two main difficulties with the CLT approach involving teachers. Because some English teachers in Korea have little confidence in spoken English, they have a difficult time adapting the CLT approach in their classes (Li 686). According to a study by Defeng Li, the Korean teacher Dong-soon commented "I am good at English grammar, reading, and writing. But my oral English is very poor. Since I can't speak English well, how can I teach it to my students" (Li 686)? Another problem for teachers is that there are few opportunities for training in the approach, so several teachers have a difficult time understanding what the CLT

approach is (Li 688). In addition, a number of teachers think that they cannot teach grammar rules with the CLT approach because they believe that it does not teach the necessary grammar rules for the students to pass the Korea version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT). Since many English textbooks in South Korea have been designed under the Grammar-translation and Audio-lingual methods, teachers have to design their own materials when they try to apply CLT in their classes. However, some teachers lack experience and do not have enough time to make CLT materials (LI 689). For example, according to the study by Li, high school English teacher In-Ran commented that she has to be at school from 8:00 to 6:30. Because her husband is working in another city in Korea, she has to take care of her kids in the evening, so she does not have time to prepare CLT materials (689).

There are some additional difficulties caused by students. Many Korean people realize how important communicative proficiency in English is, but students in middle and high school still emphasize grammar because of KSAT, which is mostly focused on grammar (Li 690-691). In Li's study, he mentions a comment made by English teacher Young-Cheol:

This exam [KSAT] has had tremendous influence on the English teaching in South Korea. As soon as students start middle school, they have a clear goal in mind-to pass the [KSAT]. Teachers also have a clear goal in mind-to help students' grammar knowledge and reading ability, both students and teachers are interested in grammar and reading in English classes. (Li 692)

Adapting to the CLT approach is difficult for students because they do not have many opportunities to speak English, so they are less likely to speak English in the classroom. Even though there are some English speaking classes in their schools, the students might consider it a waste of time to take these classes because there are currently no speaking sections on exams.

Traditional teaching instruction in Korea involves students listening to lectures. They do not respond to teachers directly and therefore, are unaccustomed to the CLT style (Li 690-691).

Furthermore, the Korean education system itself makes it difficult to adapt to the CLT approach. It is important for students to practice spoken English and for teachers to monitor students' progress in CLT, but the large number of students in a Korean classroom makes it difficult for teachers to observe individuals (Li 691). For example, in Li's study, the English teacher Jin-Kyu commented that it is very difficult to control nearly 50 students in one class. When every student starts to practice English, the class can be loud, and it is difficult to keep students' attention (691-692).

Finally, when it comes to CLT, certain tools and materials are needed which require additional funding, but it is not easy to get extra funding (Li 692). There are few specific assessment tools for communicative proficiency, and it takes time to check students' ability to speak in English (Li 695).

Because the CLT approach was developed in Western countries, it is difficult to adapt to eastern English as Foreign Language (EFL) situations with different education systems. When adapting to the CLT approach, Korean instructors and the government should modify their traditional approach and develop their own methodologies to be more suitable for their particular EFL context (Li 698).

In conclusion, since English education was introduced in Korea, how Korean students learned English has changed significantly. Furthermore, English education has been affected by other countries such as Japan and America. In addition, by putting more effort towards the English educational system, it has changed from a grammar-focus to a communicative-focus. In the next section, general English exams in Korea will be discussed.

### **3. General English Exams in Korea**

As described above, Korean people take several English examinations, specifically, the Korean version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT), the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and the Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL). People have different reasons for taking these tests. Korean high school students have to take KSAT to enter a university, but those who receive high scores on the TOEIC can take that test instead of taking KSAT. If adults want to be employed by a Korean company, they should take the TOEIC. If someone wants to study abroad, he or she has to take the TOEFL to be admitted to the schools. Further discussion of the examinations and how they affect Koreans will be explained below.

#### **3.1 The English section in the Korean Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT)**

Prior to KSAT, English skills were assessed using the College Entrance Academic Proficiency Test. On the old examination, the English section emphasized reading comprehension and “phonological, lexical, and grammatical knowledge” (K. Oryang). However, the government reformed the examination for the sixth and seventh curriculums in 1993 and 1997 because of the impact of globalization and English fever in Korea (Park 52). This new reformed exam is the Korean version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT).

Since 1994, the government has administered KSAT, which includes reading as well as listening comprehension. Every Korean high school student must take KSAT to enter a university. The purpose of KSAT English section is to check communicative competence, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension (K. Oryang). As is well known in Korea, the KSAT exam is considered very important because it can determine many things regarding one's status, job opportunities, and quality of life. Therefore, most students put in a lot of

energy into doing well on the exam.

When KSAT was first introduced, the listening portion was only sixteen percent of the whole English section, which meant eight questions out of fifty questions. Year after year, the listening comprehension portion has changed to improve students' communicative abilities. In 1996, the questions for listening grew to more than thirty percent, seventeen questions out of fifty questions. It seems there are no direct grammar, speaking, and writing sections in the exam, but the three sections are included indirectly. In the listening section, five questions out of the seventeen test for indirect speaking ability. Students listen to unfinished dialogues and then are required to choose the answer. In terms of reading comprehension questions, it takes up about sixty percent of KSAT in the English section. This reading comprehension has also changed somewhat from the old exam: the length of the passages is longer than before and the vocabulary standard has become more difficult. Writing and grammar ability is tested through the reading comprehension test indirectly. Students are given paragraphs with phrases removed and they can logically choose the correct multiple-choice answer (K. Oryang). The students have seventy minutes for both the reading and the listening comprehension. To illustrate this point, KSAT questions will now be discussed. Here is an example of a listening comprehension item with indirect speaking:

17. After you listen to the situation, you choose the answer that Jessica will say to her teacher. (다음 상황 설명을 듣고, \_\_\_\_\_Jessica가 선생님께 할 말로 가장 적절한 것을 고르시오.)

① I think Tom needs some medical help.

② I'm sorry, but I have to go to the hospital.

- ③ May I go to the bathroom, please?
- ④ My condition couldn't be better.
- ⑤ What's going to be on the exam tomorrow?

This is a reading comprehension passage followed by an indirect writing question:

27. The truth is that everyone has a story. Every person we meet has a story that can, in some way, inform us and help us as we live the story of our own lives.

When we acknowledge this truth and begin to look at others as

\_\_\_\_\_, we open ourselves up to new

possibilities in our lives. In reality, the people who are most different from us probably have the most to teach us. The more we surround ourselves with people who are the same as we are, who hold the same views, and who share the same values, the greater the likelihood that we will shrink as human beings rather than grow.

- ① rivals competing against us
- ② reliable guidelines for conformity
- ③ potential sources of valuable information
- ④ members of the same interest group
- ⑤ attentive listeners of our life stories

(KICE .com)

Questions number 17 and 27 are the only way to measure students' speaking and writing abilities, and KSAT only measures these indirectly. Although question number 17 is intended to test speaking abilities, students do not, in fact, speak English but simply check multiple choices.

Likewise, in question number 27, students are not asked to respond with sentences or short essays for the writing assessment, rather they answer in multiple choice format. These indirect speaking and writing ability questions in KSAT cannot measure students' productive English proficiency. In other words, this is a disadvantage of KSAT: Korean students do not have an opportunity to directly speak and write English. Without these prospects, students are prevented from learning how to communicate with English native speakers.

### 3.2 TOEIC

A wide variety of Koreans take the TOEIC. The examination TOEIC was introduced in Japan by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The purpose of the exam is to assess Second Language (L2) learners' ability for international business communicative skills. Since its introduction, a great amount of people have taken the exam. 1.8 million people took the exam in 2004 and 1.9 million in 2007; more Koreans took the exam than Japanese people. According to the Korean newspaper *Korea Daily*, 90% of the test takers are Korean and Japanese. This shows how important the TOEIC is in Korea (Choi 43-44).

There are often different reasons why people take the exam. Since the 1980s, major corporations have accepted the TOEIC exam as a mandatory requirement (44). Therefore, most of the Korean university students have had to prepare for the exam to enter companies. In addition, some universities adopt the TOEIC as the requirement test when high school students enter the university. Some high school students might enter a great university, if they have an excellent TOEIC score. Most university students need to receive a minimum TOEIC grade to graduate from the university. Lastly, because people in a company can be promoted easily when they have proper grades, they prepare for the TOEIC a lot. These tendencies for pursuing



the exam in Korea create a negative washback effect.

### **3.3 TOEFL**

The TOEFL was introduced in 1964 by ETS and more than 750,000 people take the exam every year. Most L2 learners take the exam to enter school in English speaking countries such as America, Canada, and Australia. Almost 100,000 Korean people out of 750,000 take this exam: they are one of the main test takers of the TOEFL exam. Because the questions for the TOEFL consist of academic materials, some high schools, universities, and graduate schools ask students to take the exam (Choi 45). Like the TOEIC, the high rate of students aspiring to take the TOEFL exam leads to washback effect in Korea.

## **4. Washback effect**

### **4.1 The definition of washback effect**

Many people consider tests and test results important because they affect many things in the educational system in terms of quality, structure, job opportunities, individual careers, and society. Tests and the results of tests can be used for the planning of school curriculum (Taylor 154) and can affect teachers' and students' perspectives.

Specialists have defined the term washback (or sometimes backwash) in slightly different ways: it could be defined with a very simple sentence, but washback also incorporates more complex ideas that scholars have been debating about. The washback effect refers to the varying effects that testing tends to have on classrooms, teachers, and curriculums. According to Wall and Alderson, the effects of washback can influence the classroom in both positive and negative ways (Bailey 1). Bachman & Palmer define washback as a both positive and negative

expression: the term refers to “positive or intended [effects] (Bachman & Palmer, 1996), beneficial (Buck, 1988; Hughes, 2003) or harmful [effects] (Buck, 1988), [and] negative or unintended effects” (Ozmen 217). Bachman and Palmer also believe that there might be two levels: ‘the macro level,’ and ‘the micro level.’ The former happens in a societal or an institutional background, and the latter one occurs on an individual level. David and Messick have similar ideas about washback, in that exams can affect curriculum content, teaching, and learning strategies in the class (Ozmen 217). Shohamy also strongly believes that language tests can affect the educational system: she thinks that the external examinations change the teachers’ and students’ behavior. According to Shohamy, there are four important concepts of washback effect:

1. The Washback effect refers to the impact that tests have on teaching and learning.
2. Measurement driven instruction refers to the notion that tests should drive learning.
3. Curriculum alignment focuses on [the] connection between testing and the teaching syllabus.
4. Systemic validity implies the integration of tests into the educational system and the need to demonstrate that the introduction of a new test can improve learning. (Bailey 3-4)

Alderson and Wall studied washback effects in Sri Lanka, and Khaniya restudied it in Nepal, Huges, Turkey, and Wesdorp, Netherlands. Alderson and Wall made fifteen washback hypotheses:

1. A test will influence teaching.

2. A test will influence learning.
3. A test will influence what teachers teach; and
4. A test will influence how teachers teach; and by extension from (2) above,
5. A test will influence what learners learn; and
6. A test will influence how learners learn.
7. A test will influence the rate and sequence of teaching; and
8. A test will influence the rate and sequence of learning.
9. A test will influence the degree and depth of teaching; and
10. A test will influence the degree and depth of learning.
11. A test will influence attitudes to the content, method, etc. of teaching and learning
12. Tests that have important consequences will have washback; and conversely,
13. Tests that do not have important consequences will have no washback.
14. Tests will have washback on all learners and teachers.

According to Resnick, high-stakes testing such as TOEIC, TOEFL, or KSAT, might reform the way teachers instruct and the way students respond to the instruction positively or negatively (Cheng 254). Several studies show that teaching and learning can be impacted by high-stakes testing. Because teachers usually instruct their students based upon these standardized tests, many teachers will not teach material that is not related to them. Additionally, teachers might modify their instruction to meet standards of the required examination (“Changing Assessment” 254). Since teachers believe that it is significant for students’ futures to get a high score on the test, they pay more attention to the specific contents of examination.

Although the curriculum in Korea has changed since 1992, most Korean middle or high school students want to develop more reading comprehension skills rather than their communicative abilities. Because the English section on the important examination, KSAT, mostly focuses on reading, most students spend more time trying to translate from English to Korean. In other words, Korean students have very little motivation to speak and write in English. In addition, many teachers think teaching conversation skills is a waste of time because the exam does not evaluate students' speaking abilities. Therefore, many teachers do not emphasize class time activities which are centered on communicative abilities.

#### **4.2 Positive washback**

As mentioned above, according to Bachman & Palmer, there are both positive and negative washback effects (Zmen 217). Positive washback effects will be described first. Positive washback effects occur when tests affect teachers' and students' behavior and curriculum in positive ways (Taylor 154). If the students are tested with only reading comprehension, the teacher will just focus on reading. However, if listening comprehension tests are included in English exams, teachers will change their curriculum to foster students' listening ability. For example, there are some positive washback effects in the Korean version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT). Secondary school English education has been impacted by KSAT since 1994. After KSAT was administered, the curriculum in secondary school was changed from focusing on linguistic forms and English translation to reading and listening comprehension. Teachers also emphasize the importance of main idea, and inferences in English context (K. Oryang). Because of changed curriculum, students have had more chances to listen to English materials such as English chants, songs, and stories.

Positive washback “has recently been recognized as one of the main criteria for evaluating language tests” (Bailey 8). Washback has gained more attention currently due to the introduction of communicative language examinations (Bailey 8).

### **4.3 Negative washback**

There are a number of reasons why negative washback effects occur in language tests. Firstly, according to Davies and others, negative washback is when tests evaluate students’ ability in some specific section such as grammar, reading and listening comprehension only in English examinations (Taylor 154). For example, if students take an English exam only including grammar and reading comprehension, like the old exam in Korea, most students would just study the grammar and reading part because the exam with grammar and reading comprehension will have a more serious impact on their future career. Because of this kind of narrowed exam, students might not improve other parts of English abilities such as listening, speaking, and writing. In addition, most young learners take the English exam because of others, such as English instructors or parents, but not because of themselves. In other words, they are not motivated to learn English intrinsically but they are extrinsically encouraged. According to Choi’s study, 80% out of 100% students are English exam takers because they are encouraged by private institute instructors and parents. When teachers were asked about the reason why students take the exam, they answered that the test encourages them to study English and to foster their English ability. These extrinsic motivations are highly likely to cause washback on students (Choi 53-54).

There are cases of washback effect from KSAT. When KSAT started in 1994, some of the students in Korea did not focus on accuracy in linguistic forms because the exam just tested

students' reading and listening comprehension rather than grammar rules, so their English structure knowledge was unclear (K. Oryang).

When the Korean government included the listening section in the Korean version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT) to encourage listening comprehension, there was a negative washback effect. Because the rate of English speech in the listening comprehension was too slow, students could not improve their real listening skills. In other words, Korea students did not have opportunities to be exposed to real English environments (Choi 55). Although the Korean government changed the seventh curriculum to foster students' communicative ability in 1997, the government did not include direct speaking and writing tests in KSAT. Since KSAT does not include a speaking and writing ability test, it is difficult for instructors to teach both areas to their students. Some teachers try to teach communicative ability, but most of the students in high school do not consider communicating with English native speakers to be a priority because of the important KSAT exam. Their parents also encourage their children to learn mostly reading comprehension and a little bit of listening comprehension abilities (Choi 41). In terms of the reading section, it emphasizes successful skills in coping with well-organized language components such as "textual competence, and pragmatic aspects of language ability – functional competence and sociolinguistic competence" (56). However, there are some negative washback effects in the reading section as well. Some students do not have to read whole passages because there are some strategies for skipping passages: they can choose the answers with their strategies without reading the whole paragraph (56).

Another case of negative washback in Korea can be found in the TOEIC exam. Because a lot of schools and companies require TOEIC grades, Korean people are taking the TOEIC a lot. 1.8 million people in Korea took TOEIC in 2004 and 1.9 million people took it in 2005:

almost about 90 % of the test is taken by people from Korea and Japan according to Korea Daily newspaper. The problem is that receiving a high score on the TOEIC exam does not prove one's English communicative proficiency. Because TOEIC questions consist of multiple – choice, most test takers improve on choosing the best answers with the multiple choices, not their English proficiency (Choi 41-43). According to the Korean newspaper *Dongailbo* people “who obtained a perfect score on the TOEIC were found to be seriously deficient in demonstrating communicative skills” (Choi 44). The TOEIC has been criticized for a long time because it does not emphasize communication when Koreans really need to speak English. Because of these communicative ability problems, the test was changed in 2006. There are now two types of TOEIC in Korea: the first TOEIC includes reading and listening comprehension and the new TOEIC includes speaking and writing (Choi 44-45). Since many companies and schools have started to adopt the test as the requirement, the new TOEIC might bring positive washback in English education in Korea.

In conclusion, as explained above, high-stakes testing affects the way teachers instruct, the way students perceive, and the way curriculum is planned and this outcome is called washback effect. Washback can be positive or negative depending on how teachers and students are influenced by a test. Because most Korean teachers and students are impacted by KSAT, students have a few opportunities to practice communicative English abilities. For the next section, the new exam National English Ability Test (NEAT) will be described in anticipation of positive washback effects.

### **5. A new examination: the Korea National English Ability Test (NEAT)**

Through altering tests and curriculum, the Korean English education system is changing from being grammar-focused and is becoming much more communicative-focused. However, despite these changes, there are still many Korean students who cannot communicate well with foreigners in English. Because of this issue, the Korean government is seriously considering replacing the English section of KSAT with NEAT so that students can improve their English speaking proficiency (*EBS.com*). Another reason for implementing NEAT is to reduce the dependence on foreign English exams such as TOEFL and TOEIC. Lastly, because Korean children start studying English earlier, in elementary school instead of middle school, the English test needs to be changed to meet students' needs for English proficiency (*EBS.com*). It is hoped that the new exam NEAT will help students' speaking abilities and create stronger English education in Korea (K. Young Myeong).

According to the Korean Department of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Education and the Korean government will decide whether NEAT will be administered in 2012, in place of the English section of KSAT. The decision for replacing KSAT with NEAT depends heavily on public opinion. Once NEAT is accepted by the Korean government, the ministry of Education and public opinion, the new exam will replace KSAT in 2016 (K. Young Myeong).

According to the Ministry of Education, there are three different classifications of the exam: the first classification is for adults and the second and third ones are for middle and high school students. Although there are three specific types of NEAT, the focus of this paper will be on the second and third classifications of the new test (Appendix A-H). Middle or high school students can choose between the second and third levels depending on their interests, goals, and English proficiency as shown in the following chart (K. Young Myeong).



	<b>The Second level</b>	<b>The Third Level</b>
The Purpose of the Test	To assess what high school students learned in school and whether they can understand a lecture in English when they enter university	To assess what high school students learned in school and to assess students' English proficiency for daily life
Subjects	High school seniors who need to assess their English proficiency of a basic English lecture	High school seniors who need to assess their English proficiency for practical English
The Content of Assessment	<p>The ability to understand the basic topic of an academic lecture and a related topic</p> <p>The ability to express the main idea of an academic lecture using appropriate expressions</p>	<p>The ability to understand the practical topic and the related topic.</p> <p>The ability to express basic daily expressions</p>
NEAT Link to the Current English Education	English II, Translation and Composition	English, Practical English Conversation

<Figure 2> Korean Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (*KICE.com*)

The following is the temporary schedule for NEAT exam:

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Temporary Schedule	Research & Development	Simulation		NEAT			
Levels  Two &  Three	The  Preliminary  Examinations:  Three times	Twice	Three  times	Ten  Times	Twelve  Times	Twenty  Times	Twenty-  four  Times
				Decision period for whether or not the exam will be replaced			

<Figure 3> (EBS.com)

Since 2009, the new exam has been administered in eight preliminary examinations; real examinations may begin as soon as 2012. According to the Ministry of Education and the Korean Department of Science and Technology, seven middle schools and nine high schools are offering some classes to prepare for the new exam. The students in these schools will be evaluated to see how students can best prepare for the new exam (EBS.com).

### 5.1 Possible problems that students and teachers might experience with NEAT

In order for students to prepare for the new NEAT exam, the teachers and learners need to become familiar with the new exam. There may be some difficulties in preparing for the exam if the Korean government replaces the English section of KSAT with NEAT. Once NEAT is accepted for high school, the curriculum will change and that could also cause some difficulties. Since NEAT is a new exam, English teachers will need a lot of information and new materials for

English classes. In other words, English teachers will have to spend a lot of time preparing for their lectures on the new speaking section as well as checking their students' abilities in preparation for the exam. Grading speaking may also cause some problems. Because speaking assessment is somewhat subjective, this could lead to some difficulties for the test (*EBS.com*). Teachers may factor in a students' behavior instead of focusing on their English proficiency.

In addition, the new English exam could very well lead to confusion in high school English education. If the Korean government accepts the exam, it will be the first time a speaking and writing exam will be necessary for entering university. Therefore, teachers, as well as students, are likely to have a difficult time adapting their preparations for the new exam (*EBS.com*). I will discuss a possible solution to these potential difficulties in section 6 below.

## 5.2 The difference between KSAT and NEAT

NEAT and KSAT are different tests because they evaluate the four language skills in different ways. The following chart compares the differences between NEAT and KSAT:

### NEAT VS KSAT

	NEAT(for students)	KSAT(English)
<b>The Skill Being Assessed</b>	Reading ,listening, speaking, and writing	Reading, listening, indirect speaking, and indirect writing
<b>The Type of Answer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reading and listening : multiple choice</li> <li>- Speaking: brief oral responses spoken into microphone</li> <li>- Writing: short answer and essay typed on the computer</li> </ul>	Multiple choice
<b>The Type of Test</b>	Internet Based Test(IBT)	Written test
<b>Chances of Taking the Exam</b>	Twice a year	Once a year
<b>The Method of Assessment</b>	Absolute evaluation	Relative evaluation
<b>The Grades</b>	There are four scores (A, B, C, F)	There are standard scores of 1-9

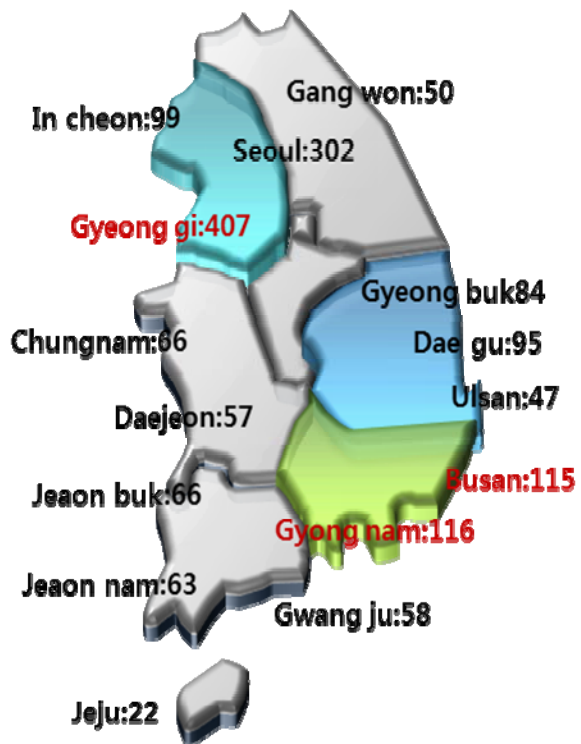
<Figure 4> Korean Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (*KICE.com*)

For the English section of KSAT, students use a pencil and paper. However, NEAT will be administered on computers for the Internet Based Test (IBT) (K. Young Myeong). NEAT will include four sections: reading, listening, speaking, and writing to encourage students' communicative ability. This is very different from KSAT English language test in that NEAT can assess students' speaking and writing abilities directly (K. Young Myeong 313-314). The

replacing of the English section of KSAT with NEAT will create a new, and hopefully better, English education system in Korea (*KICE.com*).

The types of reading, listening, speaking, and writing tasks on NEAT are multiple choice, oral response, short answer, and essay. Students are required to take KSAT once a year (*KICE.com*). Unlike KSAT, NEAT will be offered twenty-four times a year, and Korean high school students will take the exam twice a year; they can choose the highest of the two grades. The method of evaluation for NEAT and the English section of KSAT are different. As listed in Figure 4 above, the method of assessment for NEAT is a kind of absolute evaluation. For example, a student's grade will be individually defined based on a specific rubric, which is a set of criteria for assessment. However, when Korean students take KSAT, they are assessed through a more relative form of evaluation. In this instance, a student's score will be compared with other students' scores, and they are ranked accordingly. Each university has different admission requirements for the scores.

There will be 1700 testing centers where students can take the NEAT exam via a computer, and as many as 30,000 students can take the exam at the same time (*EBS.com*). On the other hand, when students take KSAT, they do not need to use computers. Evaluating students' speaking and writing abilities through a computer will save the Korean government a lot of money and time. Figure 5 shows the cities and corresponding figures for how many NEAT tests sites will be offered for each city:



Country	Place	country	place
Seoul	302	Gangwon	50
Busan	115	Chungbuk	53
Deagu	95	Chungnam	66
Incheon	99	Junbuk	66
Gwangju	58	Junnam	63
Deajun	57	Gyongbuk	84
Ulsan	47	Gyongnam	116
Gyeonggi	407	Jeju	22
Total			1,700

<Figure 5> (KICE.com)

Unlike KSAT, NEAT has the same amount of listening and reading questions. By keeping the questions balanced, students can focus on both reading and listening abilities. As described above, a Speaking and Writing section will be included; there are four questions in Speaking for the second and third level. There are two or four questions in writing for the second and third levels respectively.

### **5.3 Expected positive washback effect from NEAT**

A high-stakes examination can be used as a tool to manage the school education system by forcing students to practice in the target language (“Changing Assessment” 253). According to Noble & Smith, a better test:

will drive schools toward more ambitious goals and reform them toward a curriculum and pedagogy geared more to thinking and less to rote memory and isolated skills – the shift from behaviorism to cognitive-constructivism in teaching and learning beliefs and the assessment shift from large-scale standardized testing to performance assessment. (“Changing Assessment” 254)

Smith also states that there are several studies that demonstrate high-stakes tests, such as KSAT, influence the way English teachers instruct and the way students learn. Most English teachers try to teach the things that are included in the test. Madaus explains that when teachers consider the tests’ effect on students’ progress, they teach the target language based on the exam. High-stakes tests monitor the achievement of education and play a strong role in educational reformation (254).

In order to intentionally bring positive washback effects on a class in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Examinations Authority started changing the English section for

Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination in 1993. After the exam was changed, the curriculum was immediately altered by incorporated reading, listening and writing tasks, which require the students to carry out ‘real life’ scenarios. The new Hong Kong Certificate Examinations in English (HKCEE) positively influences classroom teaching (“Changing Assessment” 256). Liying Cheng conducted a study to see the high-stakes test influence on the English teachers’ instruction in the class. He visited nine schools in Hong Kong to observe the classes between November 1994 and February 1995. While he observed each class, there was a video camera recording the students and the teacher (258-259). From the study, he was able to compare two oral lessons in 1994 and 1995 by observing the English class and the teacher.

Activities	Teacher 1994	Teacher 1995
Pre-Lesson activities	7%	4%
Lecturing and explaining	56%	36%
Leading classroom activities	6%	4%
Activities	Students 1994	Students 1995
Pair work or group work	22%	43%
Oral presentation	9%	13%

&lt;Figure 7&gt;

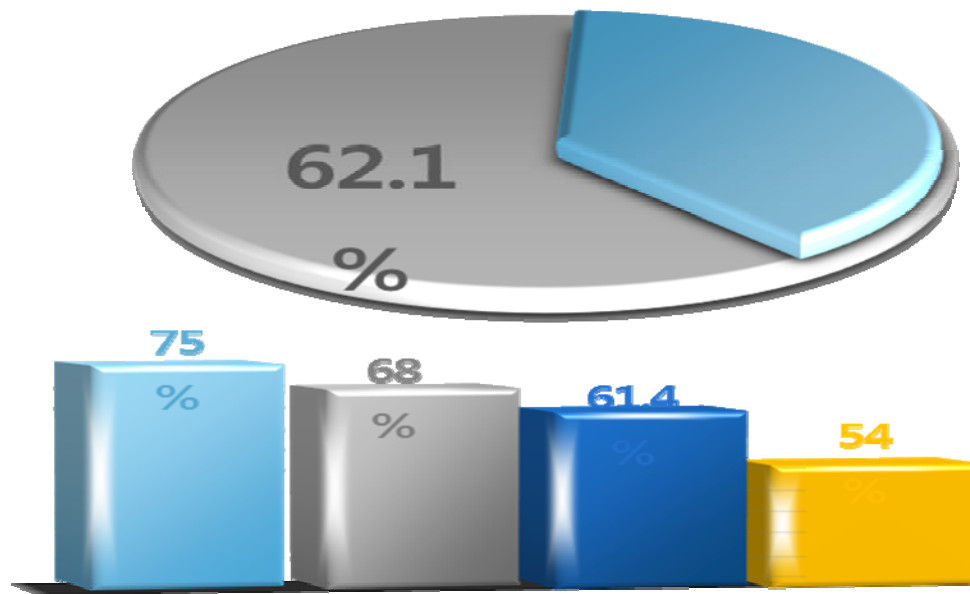
As shown in the figure 7, pair work and group work increased from 22% to 43%. Students had more chances to do group activities by interacting with their peers. Oral presentation also increased from 9% to 13%. In other words, there were more opportunities to speak out loud in the classroom. These results were, to some degree, because of the examination (“Changing



Assessment” 259-264). Moreover, Cheng found that there were more chances for students to do various activities, such as role play and group work with the integrated approach and Task-based approach by being encouraged from the new exam Hong Kong Certificate Examinations in English (HKCEE). In other words, students’ individual work decreased, but group work increased (268). The new exam HKCEE in Hong Kong changed activities for students “from *Reading aloud and Guided conversation* in the old examination paper to task based *Role Play* and *Group Discussion*” in the new exam HKCEE(256). The HKCEE in 1996 required students’ active participation in the classroom with language interaction and required performance tasks with various integrated skills for language (256). Research in another paper by Cheng has described that there has been an improvement in terms of English proficiency, but it does not address students’ improvement in their communicative proficiency. In this study, after HKCEE was introduced by the government in Hong Kong, the result showed “the use of English oral examination as a requirement for university admission appeared to lead to general improvements in students’ spoken performance” (“Impact and consequences of school-based assessment” 224).

According to the Korean educational program EBS, some countries such as Israel and Singapore also changed their English test, which affected the way teachers instructed and students’ English proficiency. The result of the test showed gradual success in those countries (*EBS.com*). From this result, the new exam NEAT in Korea may also lead to a positive washback effect in terms of English proficiency. Positive results from other countries encouraged the Korean government to implement the new exam NEAT.

In order to implement NEAT, as the English section of KSAT successfully, Gyeonggi Jin and others conducted surveys for the Korean government.



(English expert: 75%, Teachers: 68%, Parents: 61.4%, English teachers: 54%)

<Figure 8> Korean Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (*KICE.com*)

According to a recent study in 2009 from Jin and others, 62.1% of 500 people responded that the new exam NEAT will improve Koreans' English proficiency in speaking and writing (*KICE.com*). Kim Huisam and others also conducted a study and they found that 67.8% of all the participants agreed with the idea of carrying out the new exam NEAT. As a result, 72.5% of parents expected that English speaking and writing classes will be better than before. Furthermore, 66% of parents believe that their children will have better ability in English (*KICE.com*).

In conclusion, the Korean government plans to implement the new NEAT exam because of the expected positive washback effects. The KSAT exam and the new exam have many differences such as the skills being assessed, the types of answers, the types of tests, chances for taking the exam, the methods of assessment, and the grades. The new exam complements the

lack of test items from the English section of KSAT. Replacing the English section of KSAT with NEAT will be officially decided in 2012, relying heavily on public opinion. In the next section, how the Task-based Approach (TBA) will help students' English proficiency on the speaking section for NEAT will be explained.

## **6. How to teach NEAT with Task-based Approach (TBA)**

Due to globalization, the ability to speak English has become a significant matter in Korea. As I have stated above, many people in Korea spend large amounts of money and time on learning English. However, despite these efforts, many people cannot communicate well with native English speakers. This is one of the reasons why the Ministry of Education and the Korean government are replacing KSAT with NEAT, which has English speaking and English writing sections (*EBS.com*).

It is necessary to describe how to prepare for NEAT in order to best help Korean teachers and students to be successful. Although there are many approaches to teaching and learning English, using a Task-based Approach (TBA) is an excellent way for teachers to help students be ready for the new speaking section of the exam. Before defining TBA, it is important to explain what speaking abilities are needed in order to communicate. Using communicative abilities allows L2 learners to interact with others in the target language through speaking. In other words, when L2 learners share meaning by communicating with others, students develop oral communication abilities. For example, a conversation between two or more people “involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings and values” (Rahman 2). Therefore, when English teachers want to teach speaking skills in the classroom, they should use communication skills. This is appropriate for teaching and learning skills with TBA (3).

Since the end of the twentieth century, TBA has been increasing in popularity in the language teaching field (Murcia 39). It is essential for English teachers to understand the term *task* when they want to teach English with TBA. Although there are several slightly different definitions of *task*, Long (1985) defines *task* as:

A piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, taking a hotel reservation, writing a check, finding a street destination and helping someone across a road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between. Tasks are the things people will tell you they do if you ask them and they are not applied linguists. (qtd. in Sanchez 47-48)

Another definition of *task* comes from Nunan (1989) who describes it as:

Any classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form (qtd. in "Principles of Communicative Language" 8)

In spite of various definitions about tasks, there are common concepts among them. Tasks involve accomplishing several goals by doing real every day activities, which should be meaningful, and understandable.

To develop these tasks effectively, Brown states that TBA uses a target language with a

practical purpose. TBA instruction concentrates on real world tasks, and the input for the tasks should be from authentic materials such as conversations, interviews, books, and cartoons (“Principle of Communicative Language” 8-9).

According to recent reviews from Ellis and Skehan in 2003, TBA makes it possible for students to be engaged with theoretical perspectives in terms of L2 acquisition theory, which includes a psycholinguistic approach and a sociocultural approach. TBA helps students to stay motivated because the work is often less stressful as students can work with their peers and group members. Researchers argue that the psycholinguistic approach helps L2 learners foster production for language. Others claimed that the sociocultural approach encourages L2 learners to construct meanings (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 107-108).

When English teachers conduct their classes using TBA, there are some effective benefits. In order to illustrate this point, I will present a study conducted by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol. This particular study was conducted with thirty-five English as Foreign Language (EFL) freshmen students whose ages ranged from seventeen to nineteen. The students took English classes for more than eight years and their English abilities were considered to be at intermediate level. However, their exact English proficiency was unknown because they did not take standardized tests such as TOEFL or TOEIC. From the results of this study with TBA in the classroom, the researchers noticed that these learners were encouraged to study more by themselves without the help of teachers. The teachers and learners agreed that TBA helped students to think and learn more independently in order to complete tasks. One of the students stated, “studying by myself is a good thing because I can learn to solve the problems and think by myself” (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 117). Because learning English with TBA makes it possible for students to study themselves, they do not have to rely heavily on the help of

teachers.

Another beneficial result from TBA is that many students learn effective strategies that can be applied inside as well as outside of the classroom. For example, one of the students commented that he or she (The research did not make the gender clear) learned cognitive strategies for learning vocabulary such as “recording new words, reviewing new vocabulary items, and guessing meaning from context” (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 118).

Metacognitive strategies “that have been targeted in the course such as *task analysis*, *critical thinking*, and *evaluation*” (118) are also beneficial inside of the classroom as well as outside of class. Several students stated they were able to learn how to think and respond to tasks by using these strategies (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 118-119).

When the students applied these strategies outside of the class, they were also able to relate these strategies to other academic subjects. For example, when they see difficult vocabulary on an exam, guessing meaning from context, which is cognitive strategy, can help students. These strategies can also help students prepare for an examination, give a presentation, work on a group project, and listen to lectures (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 119).

It is necessary for students to have fluency in English in order to be successful on the speaking section of NEAT. According to Massoud Rahimpour’s study, students learning English with TBA were able to see improvement in their fluency. In this study, there were two groups, each group consisting of ten participants. One group learned English with TBA, and the other group learned English using Structural-Based Language Teaching (SBLT), which concentrates heavily on linguistic rules. Students’ speaking abilities were observed by a researcher and the abilities were assessed with “fluency (Words per Pause), complexity (Lexical Density), and accuracy [no grammatical errors]” (Rahimpour 52-53). In the results of this study, there are

notable differences between classes taught with TBA and SBLT. Because the class with TBA focused more on meaning rather than form, the students were able to see their improvement in fluency and complexity. On the other hand, the students who took the class with SBLT saw little progress in fluency and complexity but more improvement of accuracy (Rahimpour 51- 58). From the results of this study, it is highly likely that Korean teachers and students will prepare for the speaking section of NEAT with TBA because most students want to see improvement of fluency.

### **6.1 TBA as a supplement of the CLT approach**

As I described above, from 1992 to 1996, the Korean government was adapting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as a main goal of the sixth curriculum in order to improve students' English proficiencies (Yoon 7). The goal of CLT is for students to learn English in order to communicate without too much focus on linguistic forms. The Korean government and the Ministry of Education have made concerted efforts to adapt CLT in English classrooms in order to foster students' speaking abilities. However, many difficulties have been faced when implementing this approach in Korea. Since the mid -1990s, the Korean government and the Ministry of Education started to push heavily the use of TBA in English classrooms (*KICE.com*).

Korean teachers will manage their Korean classrooms better with TBA by effectively implementing CLT. There are many approaches in CLT, and TBA is one of those approaches. Therefore, there are similarities between these two approaches in terms of using communicative approach with authentic materials. However, these approaches each have a different focus for classes. The focus of the CLT approach is to facilitate students' communicative English abilities.

Therefore, teachers use specific communicative functions with this approach for their students.

In other words, students learn communicative functions in order to use English. However, the focus of TBA is to “provide learners with a natural context for language use,” with students using the target language in order to learn English in a real-life context (Larsen-Freeman 144).

Because of this focus, teachers do not heavily emphasize specific communicative functions in the classroom, but focus more on completing tasks by giving students many opportunities to interact with others. These interactions develop students’ English proficiencies and language acquisition because students have to comprehend tasks with their peers and express their own meaning in order to accomplish tasks (121-155). TBA has three specific procedures: the pre-task, the main-task, and the post-task (Curran et al. 23-24). Teachers are more likely to be effective English instructors because they can make clear lesson plans using these specific TBA procedures.

Therefore, this approach will help student to prepare for the new NEAT exam.

## **6.2 Principles of TBA**

There are three main principles of TBA: the use of authentic materials, the creation of meaningful and comprehensible authentic materials, and students’ interaction in groups or pairs.

Using authentic resources helps students improve their English proficiency. This principle is significant for students because it will promote a link between language and the real world.

According to Gebhard (1996), authentic materials are “a way to ‘contextualize’ language learning” (Oura 68). In other words, students will learn English through authentic materials in order to apply the target language to the real world outside of the classroom. In addition, rich input should be authentic from multimedia resources such as TV, DVDs, and video in order to elicit students’ interests for the tasks (“Principle of Communicative Language”12).



The second principle of TBA is using meaningful and comprehensible rich input when teaching English. In other words, the information the L2 learners process should be clear enough and should be related to what they have already learned. According to VanPatten, there are some common characteristics, which help students learn English. He states that, “the language that the learner is listening to (or reading, if we are talking about written language) must contain some message to which the learner is supposed to attend” (qtd. in “Principle of Communicative Language” 16). It is also significant for students to have comprehensible information so that they learn the language with meaning (“Principle of Communicative Language” 16).

Lastly, because students learn English with TBA by interacting with others, English teachers should enhance group or pair work. L2 learners solve tasks by cooperating with their peers and achieving goals using communicative skills. Students also receive input by interacting with their peers: these interactions lead to create a student-centered environment in which students have opportunity to practice speaking ability (“Principle of Communicative Language” 18).

### **6.3 Suggestions for fostering NEAT in Korea**

In order to foster NEAT in Korean high schools, here are some suggestions. One suggestion is that teachers should explain specific students’ roles in the classroom and the purpose of learning language in real life situations (Li 687). It is important to know both the students and teachers’ role in the class so that they can focus on what exactly their purpose for learning and teaching is.

Students should vigorously participate in class activities and tasks. In other words, the class should be student-centered. Teachers cannot force students to take part in the class, but

teachers can motivate students by preparing real-world contexts with authentic materials (Van den Branden 177-182).

Students take a collaborative role with others in a TBA curriculum. When students prepare for the speaking section of NEAT, they need to know how to describe pictures of events a lot of authentic information to present ideas. Teachers should put students into small groups and give them time to talk and an opportunity to share information. Students will learn how to cooperate with other students as well as build up their knowledge for what they need to know for the speaking section of the NEAT exam by doing these TBA activities (Brown 47).

There are different approaches that teachers could take in the classroom when they teach English with TBA to prepare students for NEAT. At the beginning of the lesson, teachers should bring an interesting and authentic task to the class so that the students will be intrinsically motivated by the materials. As a result, students will have a clear idea of the purpose of learning English in an authentic situation. This approach makes it possible for learners to have meaningful interactions, and it helps students improve their language ability (Van den Branden 178).

Another approach that teachers should have in the classroom with TBA is facilitating students by guiding their work. In other words, a class should be learner-centered but not teacher-centered (Brown 47). Teachers should also help the L2 learners deal with linguistic forms and cognitive problems when the students perform difficult tasks (Branden182).

Lastly, inexperienced teachers should be given training courses, and the approach should be explained more thoroughly (Li 687). Because NEAT is a new exam in Korea, a lot of teachers might be puzzled with it first. Although a number of teachers in Korea might have general concepts of TBA, they might not have concrete enough understanding to use the approach

effectively in the classroom. In order to understand TBA clearly, teachers should know several misconceptions about communicative ability teaching.

One of the misconceptions about communicative ability teaching is the idea that the teacher should not teach grammar rules. This misconception was influenced by Krashen and Prabhu's claim that it is nonessential to teach grammar to the second language, and learners obtain language ability by exposure to the target language. These ideas affected textbooks and syllabi; when Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was first introduced, there were no explicit grammar rules in the textbooks and syllabi. Many teachers and students were affected by these scholars' ideas on learning and language. It is true that too much emphasis on grammar in communicative teaching is not recommended, but it should be stressed that the elimination of the grammar teaching is not required (Thompson 10). In other words, the teachers should teach grammar if necessary. However, teachers should make sure the purpose of teaching grammar is to help students use the language orally (Li 697).

When teachers give activities for the lesson with communicative teaching, they should observe student pairs and other group work by circulating around the classroom and letting students know that the teachers will monitor their work with their group members. They should thoroughly watch students work, listen to how they work with their members, and give them error feedback. They should also make sure that the activities are not too long to keep the students' attention, and they should make the students present what they have done with their members in the class (Vasilopoulos 5).

Because lessons with TBA need a lot of vocabulary and linguistic forms, it might be difficult for lower level students. It is better for students to be motivated to do "pair work, group work, and individual work" so that they can share their knowledge and practice their

communicative ability (Buyukkarci 318). Doing pair and group work will enhance their ability to interact and communicate with others in English, and it will also lead them to improve their ideas. They can develop more confidence by solving tasks with their peers (Thompson 13).

Finally, when teachers give group activities for a lesson, they should observe students by circulating around the classroom to let them know that they monitor students' work with their group members. They should thoroughly watch students work, listen to how they work with their members, and give them error feedback. In addition, teachers should ensure that these activities are not too long not to lose students' attention. As much as time allows, they should have the students present what they have done to the class (Vasilopoulos 5).

## **7. Conclusion**

Because the English language is considered a highly significant tool for developing the Korean economy, many Koreans put strong efforts on learning English. Many Korean parents pay a large amount of money on their children's English education. Students also spend many hours learning English to prepare for English exams such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and the English section of KSAT. Despite these efforts, many Korean students rarely develop strong English proficiency skills.

Korean students are highly affected by the English section of KSAT because it determines job opportunities, promotions, and success. Therefore, they spend more time preparing for the English section of KSAT rather than practicing English proficiency skills. This makes it difficult for Korean students to develop speaking and writing skills for communication. Because this test highly affects students' plans for their future, many Korean teachers generally teach reading and listening rather than speaking and writing. Although KSAT does not evaluate students' speaking and writing abilities, those communication skills will be needed for competition with others who

have proficient knowledge of English. This is because the future generation will most likely take the NEAT exam. Therefore, Korean students who are still taking KSAT need to know the importance of productive skills.

The English section of KSAT influences teachers, students, parents and curriculum development through positive or negative washback effects. A positive washback effect in English education occurs when a test leads to students' improvement of language abilities. However, in terms of a negative effect, students will be tested with specific sections like reading and listening and this test will not encourage students to improve productive skills. By just focusing on the reading and listening sections, students have fewer chances to practice speaking and writing abilities.

Because the English section of KSAT does not improve students' English speaking abilities, Korean students do not have the abilities for English proficiency. In order for students to avoid the lack of English proficiency, the Korean government has been earnestly trying to change the English educational system. The Korean president has introduced English immersion programs, which give students a large amount of time to practice English in schools. He has also suggested substituting NEAT for the English Section of KSAT in anticipation of positive washback. I firmly believe that the NEAT exam, especially the speaking and writing sections, will facilitate students' English communicative abilities. In other words, once the new exam is officially conducted, teachers and students in Korea will focus on developing stronger productive skills.

In order to maximize the positive effect of the new NEAT exam in Korea, teachers should facilitate students' communicative abilities with TBA using authentic materials. Teaching English with TBA encourages students to think and to learn English more independently. It also helps students to learn English with several strategies that can be applied inside and outside of

the classroom. Students will practice English by doing tasks such as typing a letter, drawing pictures, finding directions from a map, and borrowing a book from a library. Accomplishing these tasks with their peers in a group will help them to improve their communicative abilities because these tasks are meaningful and real every day activities. Learning English through TBA with authentic materials will help students to promote a link between language and the real world. Therefore, the Korean students will be able to prepare for the speaking section of NEAT and to communicate with English native speakers by learning English with TBA. Some examples of how TBA might be implemented in Korean English language classrooms are given in section 8 below.

## **8. Practical application – Lesson plans**

### **1. Description of the students, teachers, and the class**

This class is designed for Korean students in a private school English speaking class. The class consists of fifteen male and female high school students that are fifteen years old. The students have been taught English for the KSAT exam, so they are used to listening to lectures that focus on reading and listening. Even though the students have taken several speaking classes in a private English school, they are not familiar with learning, speaking, and writing for the preparation of NEAT. The students have the ability to communicate with their peers in English, but they do not fully express their opinions fluently. They have to take a speaking test before taking this class, and based on these results, the teacher divides students into groups with various levels in each group. The teacher uses Kris Van den Branden's book, *Task-Based Language Education from Theory to Practice*, to build up his or her knowledge

about TBA. The teacher follows three procedures in TBA; the pre-task or planning stage, the main-task or performance stage, and the post-task or post-task assessment stage. In the first phase, the pre-task phase, the teacher should include introducing a task on a real world topic and include new vocabulary, phrases, and sentences that are related to the topic by watching a video clip or looking at the textbook (Curran. et al 23-24). This phase encourages “learners into meaningful action and to elicit the kind of cognitive and interactional processes assumed to enhance language learning” (Van den Branden 175-176). This phase is important because it will help students communicate with others in the next phase.

During the second phase, which is the main task phase, students perform tasks and plan discussion topics. Students work in pairs and groups in this stage (Curran et al.25). The teacher helps the students improve both fluency and accuracy for communicative abilities.

The last stage, the post-task stage, includes form-focused work, feedback, and evaluation. Students learn specific linguistic forms, which occur naturally during the task. During this stage, it is possible for students to be exposed to things such as syntax, words or parts of words, categories of meaning or use, and phonological features. Once completed, the teacher and students talk about what they have done for the task. Students evaluate the task by themselves and the teacher evaluates his or her students’ work. The evaluations will help teachers have a stronger plan for the future (Curran et al.26).

Throughout the class, the teacher encourages speaking English as the students accomplish tasks with their group members. However, the students are allowed to speak Korean when they need to ask the teacher questions. If the students do not know how to do a task, how to pronounce some words, or how to make sentences, they can ask the teacher for help.

The students attend three 45-minute classes per week, and the teacher follows the TBA procedures. The topic of this class is to describe a sequence of actions using pictures to prepare students for the new NEAT exam. On the first day, the teacher uses the pre-task approach. For this first task, the students describe a specific situation by watching a short video clip. On the second day, the teacher explains how to perform the main task. The students complete the main task by describing their pictures and other members' pictures. On the third day, the students will present their task in front of the class and evaluate the task together. This speaking lesson to prepare for NEAT will take one week.

In order to maximize the advantages of instructing with TBA, the teacher must have training in TBA procedures and let students know the purpose of the class. Therefore, the teacher should read books about TBA and share information with other English teachers. Because the TBA might be a new approach for the students, the teacher clearly explains the purpose for the task and the students' roles. The teacher lets the students know that the interaction between the teacher and the students is important. Group work for the task is also emphasized.

The students will have various activities in the class such as describing pictures, asking and answering questions, brainstorming, and using specific grammar rules. As a result of taking this class, the students will improve their ability to describe the sequence of action, ask specific questions, and present their opinions. The students expect that they will be better able to communicate with native English speakers.

## 2. Aids and materials

For the first class, the teacher uses a video clip to elicit students' interest and explains the



task to the class. The teacher gives some explanation about the topic, “Describing the sequence of action” to his or her students. The teacher brings several pictures that show a sequence of events. Students bring English dictionaries, a notebook, colored pens, and extra papers to the class. The classroom is equipped with a blackboard, microphone, computer, projector, and chairs and desks.

### 3. The goal of this lesson

It is important for both the teacher and students to know their goals for this lesson. The goal of this lesson using TBA is to improve students’ English speaking proficiency in real world situations with authentic materials. Because this class is the English speaking class for the new NEAT exam, the teacher thoroughly explains how the NEAT exam tests students’ speaking abilities. The teacher describes the questions for the speaking section by showing a sample of the questions to the students (Appendix A-H). This lesson is for questions number two and three for the second level and the third level, respectively. The teacher also explains how the students take part in the classroom activities with TBA. The teacher lets students know the task for the first week, which is describing the sequence of action with pictures. After the first week of the class, students will be able to describe the sequence of action in real life. However, because this is their first time preparing for the speaking section of the new NEAT exam, the students might face several challenges. The students might not fully understand how to describe the sequence of actions, how to do the task with their peers, or how to evaluate the task by themselves at the end of the lesson. To minimize these challenges, the teacher gives clear directions before the task; the teacher regularly checks students’ understanding throughout the class.

#### 4. Evaluation

Every student has a portfolio where he or she can put the results of the task. After finishing the tasks, the students organize what they have done from the activities and put the information into the portfolio. Students will see the result of the task, and they will evaluate their own abilities by seeing their portfolio. Because this evaluation would be new to several students, the teacher explains how they can evaluate their own portfolio by themselves. The students will hand in the portfolio at the end of the week on Fridays, and they will receive their feedback on Mondays. The teacher will perceive what students need to learn and what they need to practice by evaluating students' work.

#### 5. Procedure

##### **First day**

The teacher and the students greet each other by talking about the first week of the class. Because this is the first time to prepare for the speaking section on the NEAT exam, the teacher explains carefully about the two levels of the exam. Students can choose the second and third levels in the NEAT exam depending on their interests, goals, and English proficiency by showing them figure two in section five. After explaining this information, the teacher describes samples of questions using visual aid (Appendix A- H). The teacher compares the item of question of the English section of KSAT with NEAT with figure 4 in section 5.2. The teacher asks whether students have questions about the new NEAT exam.

The first task for the first week will be described, and the task is describing pictures according to the sequence. The teacher explains this task is directly related to the questions for

the NEAT exam. After this direction of the class, the teacher shows the students a video clip *America's Funniest Home Videos* by ABC, which is an authentic material. The teacher stops the video all of the sudden without telling them, and the students make inference about what will happen in the next sequence.

After watching the video clip, the teacher writes several expressions that students can use when they present their opinions about the video. The expression is “I think ,,,” “In my opinion,,,”. After learning these expressions, the teacher asks students’ opinions about the video. When a student answers the description correctly, the teacher lets them watch the rest of the clip. After these activities, students are familiar with the expressions “I think ...” “In my opinion...”, and they know what they do for the task. The students write the expression on their portfolio file.

The teacher shows the students several pictures which are related to the sequence of actions in order to let them practice more about describing the sequence of actions (Appendix I). The teacher requires students to make reference about what is happening in the picture. The teacher gives them time to think about how to describe the picture. The students present their opinions by using the expression that they have learned before. When they make mistakes for a word choice, the teacher speaks the sentence with a correct word.

After practicing presenting their opinions with the expression, the teacher explains what they will do for the next class. The students will describe several pictures with their group members using their drawing pictures. The students have to draw at least a three-picture sequence as their assignment. The students should draw some actions that they have experienced before, such as a happy birthday party, cleaning their room, or going on a picnic.

The teacher explains how to draw by drawing on the black board. The pictures should be included with the sequence of actions. The teacher emphasizes describing the sequence of actions that they have learned. After this activity, the teacher reviews and ends the class.

### **Second day**

The teacher and the students greet each other by talking about weather and the assignment. The teacher checks students' absence. The teacher reviews the first day's class with the expression that students have learned. The teacher reminds his or her students that they are learning speaking skills for the NEAT exam. The teacher has his or her students to ask questions about the exam. The teacher explains the NEAT exam clearly to his or her students once again.

After explaining the exam, the teacher checks the assignment by going through the class. Students put their drawings in front of their desks. The teacher asks his or her students to sit with their group members. There are three groups and each group consists of five members. The teacher explains the activities and asks them to describe the pictures that they drew (Before doing this activity, the teacher gives students time to think about their pictures.). The procedure for the activity is that students show their pictures to their group members and describe the picture that they drew. Each group member has to describe his or her drawings. While they describe the pictures, the teacher monitors students by going around the class. When the students do not know words for the pictures, they ask the teacher.

The teacher asks them to collect their pictures and bring them to the teacher. Each group brings their pictures to the teacher. The teacher receives a collection of pictures from group one and gives them to group two. Group two receives group three's pictures. Every group member has a picture from a different group's members. The teacher explains to the students that they

should do the same activity but with different pictures. The teacher gives them time to think about the picture so that they can present descriptions of the pictures. After students prepare how to portray the pictures, they depict the pictures to their members.

One person from each group has to describe the other's pictures in front of the class. The teacher asks the students to volunteer. After three students finish describing, the teacher asks to give others' pictures back to them. Students are asked to put their drawing pictures in their portfolio file. The teacher requests to write a description of the pictures that they put in their portfolio file.

### **Third day**

The teacher and the students greet each other by talking about weather and the assignment. The teacher checks students' absence. The teacher asks the students to hand in their portfolios at the end of the class. The teacher checks the writing assignment after the class. The third day class is Form-focused class which is post-task. The teacher explains the linguistic rules for the class. He or she asks students what tense students use when they describe pictures. The teacher explains that students should use simple present and present progressive when they describe pictures. The teacher tells students that he or she will focus on present progressive for this class. The teacher asks whether the students know how to make the present progressive form. The teacher writes the form: "Auxiliary verb Be (am, is, are) + verb ing." Because it is important to know agreement between subject and verb, the teacher explains how to make agreement; when you use a third person singular for subject, you should use "is". The teacher gives some examples of sentences: "He is studying, they are learning, and I am doing my homework." The teacher also explains there are several other usage for present progressive. Firstly, if you express

the real present, which means action at this moment, you can use present progressive. Secondly, if you want to express a temporary situation, you can use the tense. Lastly, if you want to use your plan for near future, you can use the tense.

After teaching students about the specific linguistic form, the teacher hands out a work sheet (Appendix J). In the work sheet, students see only several pictures and they practice the present progressive form with the pictures. Students speak out loud when they practice the form with their group members.

After practicing speaking with the linguistic form, the teacher gives students second work sheet (Appendix K). The teacher asks the students to write sentences that they describe to their group members. While students write the description, the teacher goes around the class to monitor students' work. When they have questions about grammar, words, or sentences, they can ask their questions.

The teacher checks whether or not his or her students' works are done. When the students complete the task, the teacher requests to hand out the students' portfolio. The teacher will check the students' work and give them their portfolio with comments next week. When the students receive the portfolio from the teacher next week, they check the comments and evaluate their work by themselves. If they have any questions about the task, they can ask the teacher.

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## Appendix A

## 국가영어능력평가시험 예시문항 - 말하기 2급

**1. 연계 질문 답하기**

문항 번호: 00 / 4


**National English Ability Test**

**수험생 정보**


성명: 홍길동  
수험번호: 0123456  
날짜: 2012.3.25  
시간: 11:00  
고사장: 한국고등학교  
검사항: 2급

Suppose you've made a friend with a foreigner. On the first meeting, this new friend asks you four questions. You should answer with one or two full sentences. After the first beep, record your answer. You will be given 20 seconds to answer each question. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.


[Question number 1: Who do you like most in your school?]

 Response Time 00:00:05


[Question number 2: How long have you known her or him?]

 Response Time 00:00:05

[Question number 3: Why do you like her or him?]

 Response Time 00:00:05

[Question number 4: What do you like to do with her or him?]

 Response Time 00:00:05

**다음**

한국교육과학연구원  
Korea Education Science & Technology Institute

## Appendix B

**2. 그림 묘사하기**


문항 번호: 00 / 4

**National English Ability Test**

**수험생 정보**

성명: 홍길동  
수험번호: 0123456  
날짜: 2012.3.25  
시간: 11:00  
고사장: 한국고등학교  
검석자: 2관

You will see six pictures and tell a story based on the pictures.  
You have 1 minute to prepare your answer. After the beep, you will have 1 minute to record your answer. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.



1. A boy jumps over a fence. 2. A train passes. 3. A boy is hit by a train. 4. A boy is being pulled back by a girl. 5. A boy is being helped up by a girl. 6. A boy is being taken to the hospital by a girl.

Response Time  
00:00:05

**다음**

한국교육과정평가원

## Appendix C

**3. 발표하기**

문항 번호: 00 / 4

**National English Ability Test**

**수험생 정보**

성명: 홍길동  
수험번호: 0123456  
날짜: 2012.3.25  
시간: 11:00  
고사장: 한국고등학교  
검사자: 2점

You will see a table showing Sumi's spending behavior. You will have 1 minute to think about your presentation. After the beep, you will have 1 minute to record your presentation. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.

The graph shows Sumi's spending behavior. She spends her money eating snacks, buying clothes, and enjoying entertainment. Describe and compare what you see in the graph. Please use the words 'more', 'most', 'less' or 'least' to compare the data.

**Sumi's Spending Behavior**

Category	Money Spent (%)
Eating snack	45
Buying clothes	30
Enjoying entertainment	25

Response Time: 00:00:05

**다음**

한국교육과학연구원  
Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation

## Appendix D

4. 문제 해결하기

문항 번호: 00 / 4


National English Ability Test

**수험생 정보**

성명: 홍길동  
 수험번호: 0123456  
 날짜: 2012.3.25  
 시간: 11:00  
 고사장: 한국고등학교  
 관서자: 2명

You will hear a story describing a problem. You will have 1 minute to think about your advice on how to solve the problem. After the beep, you will have 1 minute to record your answer. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.


Your friend tells you that she usually stays up until very late watching TV. Recently she has been falling asleep very often in class and in the library when she should be studying. You notice that her grades have been getting worse, and you think if she continues falling asleep in class and in the library, she might fail. In this situation, what would you say to her?



Response Time

00:00:05

다음


한국교육과정평가원  
Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation

## Appendix E

## 국가영어능력평가시험 예시문항 - 말하기 3급

**1. 그림보고 질문 답하기**

문항 번호: 00 / 4



**National English Ability Test**

**수험생 정보**


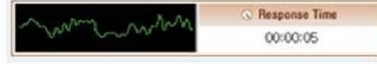
성명: 홍길동  
수험번호: 0123456  
날짜: 2012.3.25  
시간: 11:00  
고시장: 한국고등학교  
검석지: 3관

You will see three pictures. Each picture has one question.  
Answer the question based on the picture. You should answer with one or two full sentences. After each beep, record your answer for 15 seconds. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.



**[Question number 1: Is the game exciting? ]**

**[Question number 2: Does the girl jump higher than the boy?]**

**[Question number 3: Where are they?]**

**다음**

한국교육과정평가원

## Appendix F

2. 연계 질문 답하기

문항 번호: 00 / 4

National English Ability Test

수험생 정보

성명: 홍길동  
수험번호: 0123456  
날짜: 2012.3.25  
시간: 11:00  
고사장: 한국고등학교  
점수: 3점

Suppose you plan to go on a picnic this weekend with your friend. Thus, your friend asks you the following four questions. After the first beep, record your answer. You will be given 20 seconds to answer each question. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.

[Question number 1: Where are we going?]

Response Time
⌚

00:00:05

[Question number 2: What time shall we meet?]

Response Time
⌚

00:00:05

[Question number 3: Where shall we meet?]

Response Time
⌚

00:00:05

[Question number 4: What should I prepare for the picnic?]

Response Time
⌚

00:00:05

다음

한국교육과정평가원

## Appendix G

3. 그림 묘사하기


문항 번호: 00 / 4


National English Ability Test


수험생 정보


성명: 홍길동  
수험번호: 0123456  
날짜: 2012.3.25  
시간: 11:00  
고사장: 한국고등학교  
감독자: 김


You will see six pictures and tell a story based on the pictures.  
You have 1 minute to prepare your answer. After the beep, you will have 1 minute to record your answer. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.


1  



2  


3  


4  


5  



6  




Response Time

00:00:05

다음



(KICE .com)



## Appendix H

4. 문제 해결하기

문항 번호: 00/4


National English Ability Test

**수험생 정보**  

성명: 홍길동  
수험번호: 0123456  
날짜: 2012.3.25  
시간: 11:00  
고사장: 한국고등학교  
점석지: 3점

You will hear a story describing a problem. You will have one minute to think about how you would solve the problem. After the beep, you will have one minute to record your answer. After you hear two short beeps, stop recording. Now let's begin.

One of your friends asks you if you can see a movie on Saturday. You want to go but you can't because you have to go to your grandparent's house that day. However, you can go see a movie with your friend on Sunday. In this situation, what would you say to your friend?



다음

한국교육과정평가원  
Korea National Institute of Curriculum Evaluation

Appendix I



Appendix J

Work sheet 1

**Describing the pictures**

Date:

Name:

Group Number:



## Appendix K

[illegible]