

# The Effectiveness of an English Training Program for Korean Students in the Philippines

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**Abstract**—A great number of Koreans are enrolled in tutorial centers in the Philippines that have English training programs. Their objective is to pass a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam to qualify them to study in an international school. Thus, this study aimed to investigate whether the English training program offered in a Philippine-based tutorial center is effective for Korean learners. Using purposive sampling, only those who attended the training were involved. Quantitative research design was employed for the data gathered. Results revealed that the combined TOEFL simulation tests in Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing for Group A pretest and posttest significantly differed. The training showed a truly large effect on the overall performance ( $d = 1.910$ ) of the students. For Group B, medium effect was obtained in speaking ( $d = 0.659$ ), while a truly large effect was obtained in writing ( $d = 1.042$ ). Thus, the English training provided by the tutorial center proved effective based on the exam scores. It is recommended that future researchers conduct similar studies with bigger sampling to validate such findings.

**Keywords**—English training program; TOEFL exam; tutorial center; simulation tests

## I. INTRODUCTION (Heading 1)

As the quality of life of South Koreans has improved, their desire to learn the English language to become globally competitive has also increased. English, indeed, is a global language, or *lingua franca*, because more than 350 million people around the world use English as their first language and more than 430 million use it as their second language [1]. The Ministry of Education in Korea implemented a policy in November 2008 that required every middle and high school to have a native English teacher and deploy English-speaking professional teachers for students to be able to practice their speaking skills daily. The *Hag wons*, popularly known as tutorial centers or academies, also followed the trend, catering to these demands and changing their teaching programs accordingly. Many students travel abroad to learn English due to the belief that

language acquisition would be maximized with native English speakers or foreigners simply by having conversations in English rather than learning from English classes in Korea [2].

Studies have been conducted regarding the perceptions of Korean students studying abroad. In a study conducted by Hwang [3] on the beliefs of middle school students and their parents, it was revealed that middle school students and their parents find a private institutional education satisfactory because it helps students improve their academic achievement and their learning attitudes toward school as well. Cho [4] conducted a study about the perceptions of South Korean students who studied English at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK). It was revealed that many of the interviewees felt uncomfortable building relationships with Americans.

The Philippines is one of the top 10 countries that accept Korean migrants. "It is becoming a preferred venue for Koreans ..." [5, p.3]. Korean students enroll in *Hag wons* to learn Basic English, TOEFL, TOEIC, and IELTS, most especially. *Hag won* is the Korean language word for a for-profit private educational institute [6]. Good TOEFL/IELTS scores are important tests to take if Koreans want to get into an English language study program. In order to study in good universities such as UP Diliman, Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines, New York University in the US, and other well-known universities, students have to obtain the level of proficiency required of them. UP Diliman, presently the best university in the Philippines, requires foreign students to have scores not lower than 6.1 in TOEFL IBT.

Studying in Philippine *Hag wons* is quite different from studying in other English-speaking countries. First, intensive study courses require students to learn English more than 8 hours per day, which is not practiced in native English countries. Second, one-on-one classes are offered with one teacher teaching one student. Third, the number of school days is quite short; they are mostly 4 to 16 weeks. English language training varies depending on the individuals'

needs. The students may wish to focus on conversational English, business English, or exam preparation (TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, and others). As the demands are varied, the Hag won or academies focus mainly on improving the students' Basic English competencies in listening, reading, speaking, and writing. However, students from middle school to high school, 12 to 18 years old, focus more on the TOEFL exam, rather than the TOEIC, to prepare for their college entrance exam (JEDAM Academy General Manager, personal communication, January 31, 2017).

There are several factors why English language training in the Philippines has attracted several Koreans [7]. Among the factors are the following:

**Cost-effective programs.** De Guzman et al. [8] expressed that despite cultural barriers in communication, the Koreans studying in the Philippines are instrumentally motivated to learn the English language. According to Jeong [9], a professor at De La Salle, Manila, South Korean students want it in the Philippines because English is spoken widely by the people and that English education is not expensive. Dacanay [10] gives the same reason, adding that it is cheaper than in their own country or in Canada. CNN Philippines (April 17), reported that there were about 88,000 Koreans that chose to move to the Philippines for the main reason that they wanted to learn English. Learning English in the Philippines is much cheaper compared to other countries like US and Canada. For the Korean students, the cost of English language training is lower with both language education and housing included [11].

**English learning made easy for Koreans.** Strother [12] stresses that English is a mark of the upper class Koreans, and the Philippines has been able to make English language learning easier and affordable to every Korean child regardless of their family status.

**Training design/staff.** Korean parents generally perceive that the Philippines has a good educational system Strother [12]. They agree that it is less stressful studying English in the Philippines than in Korea itself. The intensive learning program using 1-on-1 session with teachers is most appreciated. Instruction in English is highly personalized and flexible. Depending on the perceived need of the students, the training can always be extended.

**Support services.** Korean parents are willing to spend much just to let their children pass the standardized tests required for entrance in universities [12]. Support services provided in the

Philippines come in the form of food and lodging, tutorial office assistance, and tours included in the learning program that Korean parents pay for.

Korean students, most especially those who have been in the Philippines for a few months, are not that exposed to the culture of Filipino English speakers; besides, their inadequacy to speak the English language inhibits them from socializing with the community. They prefer to learn English in their own dormitories. They spend most of their time in 1-on-1 classes to intensify their ability to learn English. There is, therefore, a need to carefully examine how effective studying in the Philippines is, most especially in the Hag won or the academy. Thus, in this study, the researchers sought to carefully examine the effectiveness of studying English in the academy using performance scores in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the Secondary Level English Proficiency Test (SLEP), and the TOEFL simulations in the four (4) macro skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

#### *A. Theoretical Framework*

This study is anchored on the theory of Vygotsky [13], as cited in Cherry [14], the zone of proximal development. With Korean students having come to the Philippines expressly to undergo English language learning for a variety of reasons, such desired levels of mastery can only be reached in the presence of more learned adults [13], as cited in McLeod [15], guiding the apprentice students. Complex skills may be too difficult to master on one's own; thus, scaffolding, seen in the guidance and encouragement of a knowledgeable person providing support is much better. This may be done to widen one's vocabulary; get higher TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC scores; or write for academic purposes more proficiently (JEDAM Academy General Manager, personal communication, January 31, 2017).

#### *B. Objectives*

This study aimed to investigate whether the English language training program offered by JEDAM Academy is effective for a select group of Korean learners. Specifically, it aims to describe the Philippine English Training Program for the Koreans, to find out if there is a significant relationship between the scores of Korean students before and after conducting the English training intervention program, and to describe the perceptions of Korean learners regarding the English training program in the Philippines.

## II. METHOD

### A. Research Locale

The study was conducted at JEDAM Academy English Institute located at Unit 1201 ALPAP II Building, Trade Street, corner Investment Drive, Muntinlupa City 1780, Metro Manila with the consent of its CEO and general manager. The JEDAM institution can accommodate 100 students at the same time. JEDAM Academy English Institute has been existing for 15 years and is well-acknowledged as an English teaching institute among Koreans.

### B. Research Design

This study used a mixed-method research design. The quantitative method was applied in research question no.1. for the results of the pretests and posttests to know whether there was an improvement in the performance of the students. The descriptive method designed to investigate the present existing condition was appropriate since this study described the effectiveness of studying English in the Philippines for Koreans and the factors why they chose to study in the Philippines. The qualitative method was applied in research questions no.1 and no.3. Question No. 1 is about an interview with the manager of JEDAM Academy while Question No. 3 was a perception survey with the students.

### C. Respondents of the Study

To maximize the quality and accuracy of the research, the respondents of this study were 100% Korean students in the Philippines (19 respondents) from JEDAM Academy.

### D. Sampling Techniques

This study used purposive sampling technique, also known as judgment sampling. It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants. Simply put, the researchers decided what needed to be known and set out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience [16]. In this study, only JEDAM Academy accepted the researchers' request to use their students considering that the researchers intended to use only subjects who were exposed to TOEFL and SLEP tests.

In JEDAM academy, there are several groups focusing on English language training for Koreans : Conversational English learning group, Academic English learning group, IELTS learning group, TOEFL learning group, SLEP learning group (basic targets to enhance listening and reading of basic English skills). The researchers focused on the TOEFL group which is composed of only 20 respondents.

### E. Data Gathering Procedure

Before gathering information, the researchers obtained a written approval of the General Manager of JEDAM and secured the consent of the students. The survey questionnaire had been prepared to be used during the interview of 20 students, ages 12-18 from middle high school. Treating them with honesty and respect, the researchers administered the survey, gave instructions, and assured them of the confidentiality of the results. After the completion of the interview, survey-questionnaires were returned for the analysis.

The main researcher interviewed the General Manager about the conduct of the simulated TOEFL exam as well as its English training program. The manager agreed to give the simulated pretest and posttest results, including the test papers of the respondents to the researcher, but not to observe classes or the sessions for the English training program. After getting the test papers for the pretest and posttest , data were encoded and organized. The gathered data were subjected to statistical treatment and analysis.

### F. Research Instrument

**1. Survey Questionnaire.** The questionnaire contained questions on why Koreans undergo English language training in the Philippines. The researcher adapted and modified Yun's [17] survey questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha for the scales were .551 cost/accessibility and .817 training design/staff. Definitely, the survey questionnaire is in need of revision. It was further examined for reliability and validity as only the part on training design/staff was found applicable; it may be that the items are not closely related.

**2. TOEFL simulation tests.** The Test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL, is a test which measures people's English language skills to see if they are good enough to take a course in a university or go to graduate school in English-speaking countries. It is for people whose native language is not English, but wish to study in an international university. This measures how well a person uses listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills to perform academic tasks. This test is accepted worldwide by about 7,500 colleges, universities, and agencies in more than 130 countries. Indeed, it is the most widely recognized English test in the world.

Given the importance of the TOEFL test, a lot of students of all ages from elementary to high school from

from ESL countries enroll at Hag wons (academy) to learn how to take the TOEFL exam. Due to its high demand, the Hag wons have the responsibility to improve the students' scores in the TOEFL test, as well as show to parents that students' abilities improve on a monthly basis (as the parents are the ones who pay the tuition fees, making such a priority for Hag wons). To measure students' progress, the Hag won must have eligible and acceptable proof. The best way is to show them a "monthly progress report" comparing previous simulation test data with present data. In this case, TOEFL simulation tests are widely used at private academies (Hag won). Hag wons gather TOEFL simulation test items from previous TOEFL tests or get these from TOEFL study books.

#### G. Statistical Treatment of Data

Data were put in distribution tables and subjected to treatment using the following statistical measures:

**1. Frequency and percentage.** To describe the kind of respondents, descriptive statistics was used by getting the frequency, number of occurrences, and the corresponding percentage.

**2. T-test.** Inferential statistics was used to test the null hypothesis of no difference, specifically t-test which was used to compare two different sets of values. It is generally performed on a small set of data. T-test is generally applied to normal distribution which has a small set of values. This test compares the means of two samples. It uses the means and standard deviations of two samples to make a comparison.

**3. F-test.** Another measure used was F-test, a method to compare the variance of two different sets of values. F-test is applied on the F distribution. For calculating F values, the mean of two given observations has to be obtained first before their variance is computed. F-test value is expressed as the ratio of variances of two observations. The comparison between the variances of two sets of data can lead to many predictions.

**4. Cohen's d.** In this study, the effect of English language training was measured to gauge

how effective such training was for the respondents.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section focuses on the answers to the specific questions asked in the statement of the problem. The first question is, "How may the English Training Program for the Koreans in the Philippines be described?"

English Training Program in the Philippines, as described in the study by the general manager (personal communication, January 31, 2017), offers mathematics, science, and English (TOEFL, IELTS, General Conversational English, and Educational English). Korean students study at the academy because their goal is to study in an international school.

One-on-one session is mostly offered to have an intensive learning. If students are poor in vocabulary, then the teacher provides the students 100 words daily to be memorized and show them how to form sentences with the provided words. In speaking, students are encouraged to talk continuously, and while they are talking, their pronunciation and intonation are corrected.

Science and mathematics are also taught, but their target is to make students get high test scores such as in TOEFL and IELTS so that they could go to their desired university in the future. TOEFL scores are preferred in the Philippines, U.S., and Canada. IELTS scores are for England, Australia, and others.

TOEFL includes Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Every day, students are taught 20 different words, write paragraphs or essays, listen to 10 listening questions, and answer 1 or 2 questions from an article. Students attend 2 to 3 continuous hours of training daily (8:00 a.m.-11:00a.m.), and for the last week of every month, they are required to take the simulation TOEFL test to measure their improvement.

The second question is "Is there a significant difference in the TOEFL performance of the learners after attending the English Training Program?"

Table 1 shows the TOEFL scores of nine students in Group A.

Table 1. TOEFL Scores in Group A-LSRW (N=9)

	Mean	SD	Cohen's $\delta$	VI	df	t	p-v	Decision	VI
TOEFL Scores									
Pretest	47.11	10.13	1.910	T	8	5.734*	0.000*	Reject	sig
Posttest	69.33	12.96							

\*Sig @.05 (@-tailed)

As for the TOEFL scores of nine (9) out of 20 respondents, these showed effect on the English training in the Philippines that is given the verbal interpretation (VI) of truly large effect ( $\delta = 1.910$ ), making improvement truly significant ( $t = 5.734^*$   $p-v = 0.000 < 0.050$ ). As shown in the TOEFL scores in Table 1, studying English in the Philippines has shown itself to be truly effective. In like manner, Lee and Park [18] noted in their study that there is a direct correlation between language learning abroad (Philippines) and getting high TOEIC scores.

Table 2. Scores in TOEFL Simulation: RLSW (Group B, N=11)

TOEFL Simulation	Mean	SD	Cohen's $\delta$	VI	df	t	p-v	Decision	VI
<i>Read-ing</i>									
Pretest	12.18		0.329	S	10	1.571	.147	Fail to reject	ns
Posttest	13.42	3.945 3.594							
<i>Listen-ing</i>									
Pretest	11.82	2.857	0.525	M	10	1.574	.147	Fail to reject	ns
Posttest	13.45	3.333							
<i>Speak-ing</i>									
Pretest	12.27	8.101	0.802	L	10	3.619	.005**	Reject	sig
Posttest	17.64	4.896							
<i>Writing</i>									
Pretest	11.27	3.133	1.210	T	10	3.340	.007**	Reject	sig
Posttest	14.95	2.945							

\*\*Sig @.01 (@-tailed)

Table 2 on the TOEFL simulation tests shows that English training in the Philippines proved to be significant and very significant ( $t = 3.619$  and  $3.340$  with  $p-v = .005^{**}$  and  $0.007^{**}$ ) in the areas of speaking and writing, respectively, where the effect of training was considered large and truly large ( $\delta = 802$  and  $1.210$ ). Most of these students had had trainings for quite sometime in the Philippines; time may have been the crucial factor affecting the effect of training (and exposure). In this case, training covered about seven (7) months; that is, from January to July 2017 and five (5) assessments by way of simulations to assess improvement made in the development of these skills. That speaking is one of the most improved skills affirms the findings of Yun [17] in his study. One thing noted is that individual performance in these simulations showed improvements made though these may not be very accurate [19]. In the listening test, the result was insignificant.

The third question is "How do Korean learners perceive the effectiveness of the English training program in the Philippines?"

A close examination of the data made available thru the survey revealed important things: The respondents who came to the Philippines to undergo English training perceived the whole training as *maybe effective*. In terms of support services, they ranked it as # 1 with mean = 2.08 given the verbal rating of *moderate*. The training design/staff ranked #2, while cost/accessibility ranked #3

The fact that English training in the Philippines does lead to substantial overall improvement [20, 21] in these skills -- initially in listening (Group A), and eventually in speaking and writing (Group B), for the long term, such a training ought to be recommended to other Koreans. An examination of the perception survey results, however, indicates that a majority of the respondents (63.16%) did not give a definite yes for recommending the academy and the remaining 36.84% claimed that they would not (36.84%) which shows that they were not 100% satisfied of the program.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the English training program conducted at JEDAM Academy is effective as there were improvements from pretest to posttest in the TOEFL listening, speaking, reading, and writing test (Group A). For Group B, medium effect was obtained in speaking ( $\delta = 0.659$ ), while a truly large effect was obtained in

writing ( $\delta = 1.042$ ). The listening and reading tests did not prove any significant difference between the pretest and the posttest to support their effectiveness; hence, studies should be conducted by future researchers in these particular areas with a larger sampling to have the findings of the study validated. However, since "writing is related to reading," according to the beliefs of the National Council of Teachers Writing Group [22], p.1, and the intervention program has been found very effective for writing, the reading proficiency of the respondents may still be considered good. The strategies or techniques used by the teachers in teaching the Koreans how to pass the TOEFL exams must have been very effective. Better techniques may still be done for teaching the skills in Listening and Reading. Since the researchers were not permitted to talk with the participants after the TOEFL exams due to special reasons, it is

recommended that further interviews with the participants be conducted by future researchers in case they will experience the same results for the listening and reading skills.

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