

Positive Aspects Of Using The Competency-Based Approach To Improve Students' Listening And Speaking Skills At Philological Institutions In South Korea And Finland

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a comparative academic examination of the positive pedagogical effects of adopting the competency-based approach (CBA) for the advancement of listening and speaking skills in philological programs in South Korea and Finland. Both national systems possess distinct educational traditions yet share a commitment to aligning language education with global communicative demands. Drawing upon curriculum analyses, policy documents, and extant empirical studies, this investigation identifies core advantages associated with CBA implementation, including strengthened communicative competence, heightened learner autonomy, enhanced authenticity of instructional tasks, and more robust assessment frameworks. The analysis concludes that CBA contributes significantly to the professionalization of philological training by cultivating transferable communicative abilities essential for multilingual academic and occupational contexts.

Key words: CBA, South Korea, Finland, benefits, philological institutions, student-centered, listening and speaking

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary higher education, philological institutions are increasingly required to produce graduates capable of navigating complex linguistic, cultural, and communicative environments. Within this context, listening and speaking skills assume central importance, as these competencies underpin not only interpersonal communication but also advanced professional activities such as translation, interpretation, linguistic analysis, and academic discourse production. Consequently, many national educational systems have begun integrating the competency-based approach (CBA)—a pedagogical model emphasizing demonstrable, measurable learning outcomes and the practical applicability of skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

South Korea and Finland offer particularly instructive cases for comparative analysis. South Korea, influenced by processes of globalization and competitive educational culture, has sought to shift from traditional, exam-oriented language instruction toward communicative and performance-based paradigms (Kang, 2020). Finland, conversely, draws upon long-standing principles of learner autonomy, egalitarian participation, and multilingual citizenship, embedding CBA within a broader pedagogical ecosystem oriented toward student-centered learning (Leppänen et al., 2019).

2. Methods

A qualitative comparative methodology was employed to analyze the manifestations and outcomes of CBA within philological programs in the two national contexts. Comparative research is particularly suited to identifying both structural convergences and culturally embedded divergences in pedagogical implementation. Data were derived from multiple academic and policy-oriented sources:

- peer-reviewed literature on CBA, communicative language pedagogy, and philological training
- institutional syllabi and program descriptions from prominent South Korean and Finnish universities
- national curricular reforms and governmental policy documents
- empirical studies on oral communication development in tertiary language programs

The triangulation of these diverse materials enhanced the analytical reliability of the findings. A thematic content analysis was conducted using predetermined and emergent categories. The data were coded

according to the following analytic dimensions:

- Competence development outcomes (e.g., listening strategies, oral fluency, interactional skills)
- Pedagogical processes and environments (e.g., task authenticity, learner autonomy, instructional flexibility)
- Institutional and sociocultural factors (e.g., educational ethos, policy drivers, technological infrastructure)
- Cross-case comparison enabled the identification of parallel advantages and context-sensitive distinctions.

This study relies solely on secondary sources and does not incorporate empirical classroom observations or longitudinal testing. Nonetheless, the consistency of findings across independent academic and policy documents provides a sound basis for analytical interpretation.

Results

The implementation of CBA has accelerated the transition from grammar-based instruction to communicatively oriented pedagogy. Philology students demonstrate higher oral fluency and increased interactional competence due to systematic engagement in performance-based tasks such as debates, group discussions, and simulated professional scenarios. Listening instruction similarly benefits from exposure to diverse authentic audio materials, yielding improvements in comprehension speed and pragmatic interpretation (Kang, 2020).

Clear articulation of competencies enhances students' understanding of expected performance outcomes. This transparency fosters greater motivation to engage in speaking tasks, supports self-regulated learning, and reduces anxiety associated with oral participation.

South Korea's technological infrastructure facilitates innovative CBA implementation. AI-driven pronunciation tools, interactive online simulations, and multimedia listening platforms provide highly individualized learning opportunities and contribute to more precise feedback on oral performance.

Finland's student-centered pedagogical culture aligns seamlessly with CBA. Philology students participate in designing learning trajectories, maintaining listening portfolios, and setting personalized speaking objectives. This autonomy deepens metacognitive awareness and supports sustained improvement.

The Finnish approach prioritizes multilingual proficiency and cultural literacy. CBA reinforces these aims by encouraging students to apply cross-linguistic listening strategies and engage in intercultural oral communication tasks, thereby enhancing pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence (Leppänen et al., 2019).

Finnish institutions employ comprehensive oral assessment rubrics, continuous feedback cycles, and peer-evaluation mechanisms. These practices contribute to more accurate monitoring of student progress, particularly in pronunciation, discourse structuring, and interactional responsiveness.

In both countries, CBA structures philological instruction around authentic communicative situations—academic presentations, interpretive dialogues, translation role-plays, and intercultural interactions. This alignment significantly enhances graduates' readiness for professional linguistic roles.

CBA facilitates differentiated task design, enabling educators to adapt oral and listening activities to varying proficiency levels. Such flexibility is essential in heterogeneous philological cohorts and contributes to more equitable learning outcomes.

Competency descriptors provide both instructors and students with precise criteria for successful oral communication. This clarity improves curriculum coherence, supports constructive alignment, and strengthens instructional consistency.

Both systems rely heavily on digital listening materials, authentic speech samples, and technologically supported oral assessment tools. These resources enhance exposure to naturally occurring language and promote higher communicative accuracy.

Discussion

The comparative results indicate that CBA offers substantive pedagogical advantages for enhancing listening and speaking skills within philological education in both South Korea and Finland. The model's emphasis on demonstrable performance aligns with current global expectations for language professionals who must operate effectively in multilingual and multicultural environments.

CBA's positive impact is most evident in its ability to foster transferable communicative competence.

Rather than focusing on rote grammatical knowledge, the approach prioritizes the mastery of operationalized listening strategies, pragmatic interpretation, and fluent oral expression—competencies indispensable to philology graduates.

The findings also highlight that CBA enhances learner agency. Finland's emphasis on autonomy and Korea's increasing adoption of self-regulatory practices both demonstrate that when students take greater ownership of their learning trajectories, oral proficiency develops more sustainably. Moreover, the technology-enhanced environments characteristic of Korean institutions and the robust formative assessment culture in Finnish universities both function as powerful enablers of the competency-based model.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. South Korean programs sometimes encounter structural constraints such as large class sizes and persistent exam-oriented traditions. Finnish institutions face issues related to limited contact hours and the resource intensiveness of individualized oral assessment. Yet even with these constraints, both contexts exhibit significant net benefits.

CONCLUSION

The competency-based approach constitutes a highly effective pedagogical framework for improving listening and speaking competencies in philological education. Through its emphasis on authentic tasks, transparent performance criteria, individualized learning pathways, and technologically supported assessment, CBA enhances communicative proficiency in both South Korea and Finland. Given the increasing global demand for linguistically and interculturally competent professionals, the integration of CBA within philological programs appears not only advantageous but essential. Future research should seek to substantiate these findings through empirical classroom studies, longitudinal proficiency tracking, and cross-institutional comparative assessments.

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