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COMMUNICATION SCIENCE IN KOREA

--Past Development and Future Issues--

Professor Won Woo Hyun

I. Introduction

In general, for an academic discipline to become systematized within a particular society, it must first have unique objects of study that have matured as universal phenomena within that society. Also, this discipline must not only develop its unique concepts and theories concerning these phenomena but also have unique methods of studying these phenomena. Thus, in order for us to examine the course of an academic discipline, we must approach it first by looking at the manner in which changes in society brought about the universalization of the phenomena that are its objects of study. Such an approach is necessary in examining the academic systemization of communication science in Korea and the changes that have taken place in the theories and methodologies used to analyze and explain phenomena in Korean society related to communications.

This paper outline, in relation to the social changes in Korea, the course of communication science in Korea from its birth to its becoming an established academic discipline in society. It will then examine the changes and unique characteristics of its theoretical approach and methodology.

Finally, it will look at the issues currently facing communication science in Korea and the future direction of the discipline.

II. Social change in Korea and the Establishment of communication Science

As was the case in West European countries, where the development of modern communication media coupled with the increase in the social importance of these media led to the establishment of communication science for the first time, so in Korea this discipline has become established in close parallel with changes in society and in the social role of mass communication media.

The general tendency is to divide changes in contemporary Korean society into these major stages. We will first outline these three stages, examine the function and position of mass communication media in each stage and indicate the characteristics of related communications studies.

The first of these major stages covers the period from national liberation in August 1945 through the political and social transitional period of the 1960s. For communication sciences, this was a period of birth. During this period, newly independent Korea lacked a consensus among its people regarding political systems. The result was its incorporation into the Cold War World order and repeated upheaval stemming from ideological chaos. Newspapers, the major medium of mass communication in Korea during this period, seemed to mirror this

social disorder, springing up in large numbers as mushrooms after a rain and each trying frantically to shout out to the people in its own voice. Journalism became the arena for ideological competition. Newspaper in this period enjoyed more freedom than at any other period in history, so much so that they were out of touch with the feeling of insecurity that plagued the vast majority of the population. However, as the political system stabilized in the mid-1960s, the newly established broadcast media attracted attention as an integrated medium capable of resolving the social instability of the period and formulating a social consensus. Studies in communications science at this time were conducted on an elementary level and their major tasks were to adopt the concepts of studying mass communications, to introduce trends in studies being conducted in other countries and to indicate the future direction for studies in Korea.

Along with introducing foreign studies in the mass communications phenomenon that was quickly maturing as a universal phenomenon, there were many who stressed the need for full scale studies to be conducted within Korea as well. In actuality, however, there was no instance in which a full scale study was launched. Efforts to do so only did not go beyond defining the concept and scope of mass communications and to describe their function in society.

The second stage that began in the late 1960s and extended through the 1970s was a period, for society in general, of modernization through rapid economic growth. For communication sciences it was a period of introducing the theoretical and

methodological elements necessary for establishing its own systemic structure as an independent academic discipline. Establishment of political stability had nurtured a general belief among the public that now the country possessed the means to escape extreme poverty. Government policies responded by focusing on economic development as a means of modernization. Economic growth averaged above 10% annually and the basic industries that are the phenomena of mass society, such as transportation, telecommunications, were expanded, and the process of urbanization was begun. Mass media in Korea moved beyond its transitional proliferation during the previous stage into a period of adjustment, and media organizations began to develop as independent industries. This phenomenon was a result of economic development and the remarkable growth in the availability of newspapers and other means for public access to media. Journalism was able to seize its first opportunity to become a mass medium in the true sense of the term. During this period, journalism was used as a means of achieving national goals, and was required to fulfill the functions of "developmental media". Journalism took it upon itself the role of intermediary to social development, inspiring the public to a sense of empathy for national modernization. As journalism adopted this important role as an element of society, studies in communication also began to move beyond its previous stage of introducing the results of foreign studies to a stage in which it could apply theoretical concepts on ways to adapt mass communications to Korean society. For example, attempts were made to examine the social functions of mass communications by

applying the modernization theories of Lerner and Pye who were dominant at the time to Korea. Other attempts applied the American S-M-C-R-E model of Lasswell and Schramm to mass communication and personal communication phenomena in Korea in order to formulate theoretical paradigms.

The third period covers the late 1970s and the decade of the 1980s. Within society in general, the disintegration of authoritarian political structures and the rise of a popular desire for democratization made this a transitional stage for social democratization. For communication science this period saw the beginning of the rise of an alternative to the existing American-style behavioral paradigms in the form of a critical communication theory based on a Marxist framework. Socially the period is one of transition to democracy, and for communication science it is one of expanding concepts and the scope of study. The calls for democracy that followed the political changes of the late 70s and early 80s were temporarily submerged by authoritarian political institutions, but were suddenly amplified in 1986. By this time, democratization came to be perceived by the public as a historic task. The various fields of society each sought to establish their own independent scope and to increase their influence in society as a whole through organic interconnections. Journalism, too, has been able to establish a high degree of freedom and variety. In the case of newspaper, regulations have been relaxed so that anyone wanting to establish a newspaper need only meet certain specific technical criteria allowing him to register with the government. Official

permission is no longer needed. For broadcasting, it has been decided that new television channels will be established and ownership is scheduled to be transferred from the government to joint public and private ownership. Also, cable television is expected to be introduced before long, and there is increasing discussion on the introduction of new media such as satellite broadcasting and HDTV. As democratization in society and journalism gives rise to variety and independence, communication science also has been moving away from excessive emphasis on the behavioral and functional theories of the United States to an attempt to approach and analyze the problems of Korean society historically and structurally in an active attempt to foster social change. This "critical communication theory" has been introduced little by little through the 80s, and a number of attempts have been made at actual application.

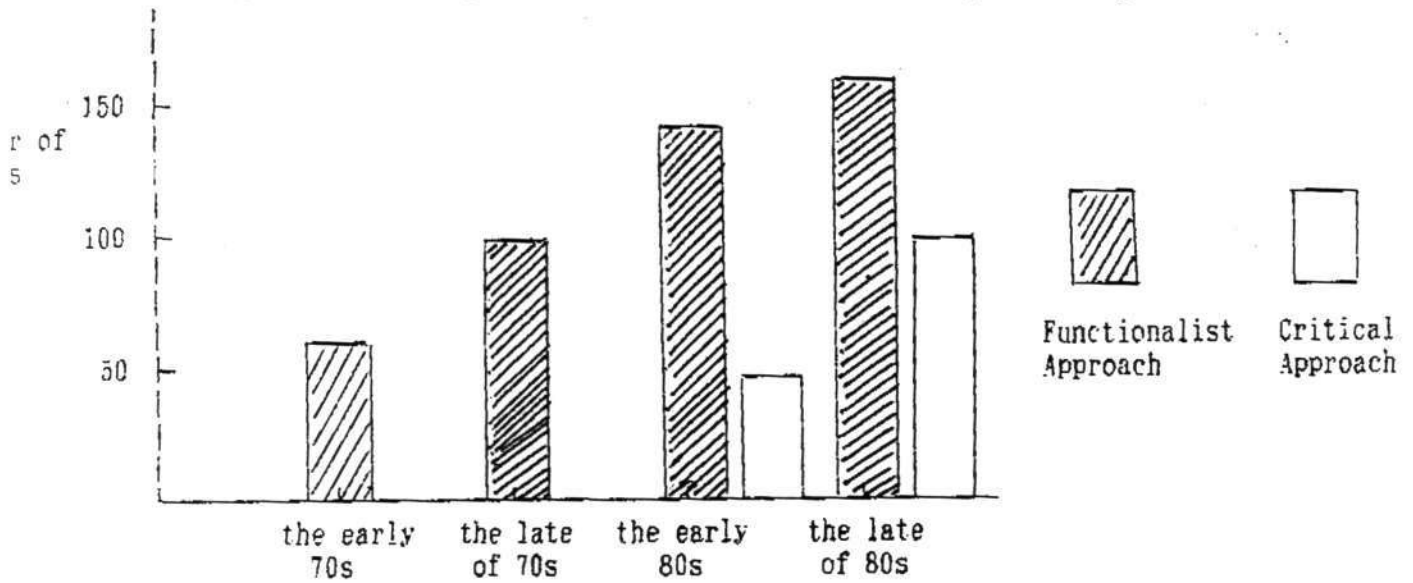
III. Changes in Communication Studies in Korea and Their Characteristics

1. Changes and Characteristics

As we have already seen above, communication theories were introduced and established in Korea during the period following the 1970s. In order to examine the characteristics of the communication theories advanced in Korea during the past 20 years, it is necessary first to divide the currents of these theories according to their respective theories, to divide the specific theories into two paradigms, that is, the functionalist paradigm and the critical theoretical paradigm and finally to indicate the changes in theory according to specific themes. The

material used for analysis here is limited to papers published in journals related to communications science and to graduate degree theses.

Figure A) Changes in Numbers of Studies by Paradigm



As can be seen in the figure above, U.S. - style functionalist theories were introduced to Korea beginning in the 1970s and have taken root as the orthodox theories of Korean communication science. In the early 70s, 63 papers were presented that adopted functionalist theories, and this number has grown steadily over the years, to a point where 162 papers of this kind were seen in the last 1980s. On the other hand, critical studies arose in the early 80s as an alternative paradigm to critique the scope and expository capabilities of orthodox theories and to critique excessive dependence on the United States. These studies have been increasing in number yearly, particularly among young scholars. Whereas only a little more than 30 such papers were prepared in the early 1980s, approximately 100 were prepared in the early 1980s, approximately 100 were prepared in the latter part of the decade. This examination of the changes in studies according to paradigms demonstrates that Korean communications studies have taken on a diverse character, with the two paradigms existing side-by-side. A more detailed analysis of this point can be made according to the following figure listing study results according to themes within each paradigm.

Figure B) Changes in Functionalist Communication Theories and their Characteristics

Classifi- cation	Sub-Classi- -fication	Number of Paper Presented				Total
		the early 70s	the late of 70s	the early 80s	the late of 80s	
General Theory	Communication theory	11	13	6	7	37
	General Systematics theory and Cybernetics	2		6	2	10
	Symbolic Interaction & Rule theory			1	7	8
Area of theory by Topic	Linguistics (Nonverbal ,Semantics,Meanings)	1	6	13	21	41
	Information Process theory	2	3	7	6	18
	Persuasive Communication	4	17	11	22	54
Contingency Theory	Personal Communication theory		4	13	8	25
	Group and Organizational Communication theory	12	10	17	19	58
	Mass Communication theory	30	48	68	61	207
Research	Methodology	1	1	5	9	16
Total		63	102	146	162	474

As seen in the chart above, studies on the theoretical aspects of mass communications have numbered 207, or approximately 44% of the total. This indicates that the major interest of mass communications studies in Korea had been the proliferation and social influence of mass media. Such functionalist studies have utilized surveys, content analysis and experimental methods to conduct corroborative analyses. The 1970s saw the rise of theories dealing with the effectiveness of mass communications and its effect on people and the initial appearance of theories on its persuasiveness, such as those dealing with public confidence in the media and its degree of influence. Paper topics became more diverse in the late 70s, and studies were conducted in the order of theory of mass communication, theory of persuasive communication and theory of personal communication. The topics dealing with the flow and effect of mass communication during this period dealt primarily with the two-stage hypothesis, utilization of media and subsidiary studies.

In the 80s, a wide variety of paper topics have been published dealing with all aspects of human communication, indicating the entry into a mature period of theoretical studies. In addition to studies on the effectiveness of mass communication, we have seen a variety of topics, including those dealing with personal communication, linguistics and semantics, general structure theory and cybernetics.

2. Trends of Study and Characteristics in Critical Theory

As mentioned above, critical theory is still in the elementary stages of being introduced to Korea, but recently many groups of young scholars have been active in studies and discussions in this area. There are no single view on how to catagorize, but a few general catagories can be made according to characteristics of their major viewpoints, objects of study and methodologies. These are the cultural approach developed by R. Williams and S. Hall which conducts an analysis of the manner in which mass media enter into the formulation and functioning of culture within the social totality; the politico-economic approach represented by P. Golding and G. Murdock which focuses on the ownership and control of the journalism industry in an attempt to discover the principles relating to the production, distribution and consumption of the journalistic product; the hegemonic theory of A. Gramsci; the cultural imperialism theory of H. Schiller and others; the critical theory of the Frankfurt scholars that seeks to critique the aspects of cultural industries that maintain and strengthen capitalist society; and the structural approach that attempts to understand the ideology of R. Barthes, L. Althusser and others.

Let us now examine the tendencies within Korea according to each type of study. First, in the areas of epistemology and methodology of mass communication theory and studies, there has been an active effort since the early 80s to introduce the theoretical results gained in Britain, Germany, France, the United States and Japan. At the same, there have effort to apply

the theories of phenomenology, analysis, symbology, linguistic philosophy and other areas of humanities to communications phenomena.

Second, politico-economic studies have conducted discussions of the characteristics of the social structures of Korean society and attempted corroborative studies. In particular, work has been done on the relationship between capital and journalism and the theoretical analysis of the control and change in labor processes resulting from the monopolization of journalism.

Third, in the latter part of the 80s, there has been introductions and critical acceptance of cultural sociology, critical studies of popular culture, and structuralist as well as post-structuralist viewpoints. There have attempts at social linguistic, symbological and analytical studies of news, dramas, movies and commercial advertisements.

Fourth, in the early 80s the mainstream of cultural imperialism studies was the translation and introduction of theoretical and corroborative studies on the power relationships involving the Third World based on dependency theory and imperialism theory. In the latter part of the decade, the tendency has changed to become one of analyzing concrete journalistic phenomena in relation to the character of Korean society.

III. The Research Trend of Communication Science in Korea

1. The Research Trend of Journalism in Korea

1.1. The Development Phases

The majority of the research themes in 1960s were ethics, morality and public interest which were concerned with the responsibility of mass media, information collection/reporting and reporter's professionalism. These were normative and phenomenal approaches. The research's main concerns were mass media and political sector; press freedom and responsibility; the researches were an ethic and moralistic judgement and amplification of the above themes but failed to produce any organized approaches to journalism. Introducing the experimental, empiric and scientific approaches in 1970s the researchers began to concentrate on the studies of journalism practicality, and had their interest expanded with the research methodologies diversified. The popular subjects dealt with were accredited reporters group, the exclusive use of Korean alphabets by the press, and the editorship and press for example. In 1970s mass media researches had been mixed with journalism researches but journalism researches have been made independent.

In particular Korean doctoral papers were featured with journalism or historical approaches. Of 50 doctoral papers, some dealt with contents analysis in mass media, mass media control, broadcasting trend, fair reporting, public interests, crime report and sensationalism for instance; the political-economic and cultural approaches were noted in such researches.

1.2 The Characterustucs of Research Trend:

The analysis trend by some papers like "Press Research", "Journalism and Broadcasting". Broadcasting Research" and "Press Abitration" show the descriptive and technical aspects instead of examining the pressing journalistic issues and phenomena.

a. Of 1,006 papers on journalism, 369 dealt with information collection/reporting and editing; and only six dealt with media management.

b. Universities opened the curriculums for theory of information collection/reporting, media law and ethics and media reporting practicum but there were not enough teachers involved.

c. And there were very few texts and technical books specialized in journalism.

1.3. The Research Tasks in Future

a. The basic studies of journalism phenomena themselves should be carried out with an emphasis on the definition of news concept and on press freedom.

b. The definition of journalism and research field should be established on the ground of the basic researches, tailored to the situation in Korea.

c. The background behind the phenomena of journalism reserach, which is far from depth and consistency, should be studied.

d. Journalism curriculums for universities should be diversified and regionalized by the individual school and area.

2. The Research Trend of the International Communication

2.1 The Development Phases

The pre-1960s were an embryonic phase in the research of the international communication with only five papers published introducing foreign media system. The researches in 1960s were conducted by scholars specialized in journalism dealing with communication as the main subjects. The main themes of 7 papers were foreign media system and its introduction; four paper dealt with news analysis and the other four, with communication development. The new awareness of the international communication and its academic importance were made obvious by the issues of New World Information Order (NWIO) which were raised in 1970s. However, the themes of most of papers were the expansions of those prevailing in 1960s (12 papers; 10; 10).

A great number of papers emerged in 1980s, focusing on critical communication theory and dealing with the themes of theory of imperialism and dependency theory. Interest in information from multi-national enterprises, in knowledge gap, nation-to-nation, region-to-region, person-to-person and in cultural dependency created by the monopoly with the communication development as main theme were reduced to 6 and those dealing with foreign news analysis were reduced to 4 on a big scale; 26 papers conducted NWIO researches and 26 discussed culture industry and cultural dependency, which were the main leading research areas for the international communication.

2.2. The Achievements of Research:

Papers on the international communication printed so far are numbered 384 including doctoral thesis; 326 papers (92% of the total) were printed in 1970s and more than 66% of those were prepared in 1980s. 33 books on the international communication were printed; 88% of these (29 books) were published in 1980s; 13 books were the translations of those with an introduction. Those works published in 1980s were concerned with cultural imperialism and MWIO.

2.3. The Problem and New Tasks:

a. The Biased Researches: Researches are concentrated on the first world including Japan and Western countries; there are very few surveys made out on the Third World including Africa, South American, Middle East and South-East-Asia and on communication. Even the researches on the Third World are confined to a descriptive level, failing to make an overall attempt to take into consideration the diversity of media infrastructure and the dynamics of international relationship.

b. The Lack of Care in the Imperial Researches:

This attitude is attributable to the unsettled theory of the international communication and its approach methodology.

IV. The Problem in the Research of Communication Science in Korea and New Tasks:

1. The problems in the Research of Communication Science in Korea

The review of the trend and characteristics of the communication research over the past 20 years reveals that the communication researches in Korea have been expanded in volume over short period and that the perspectives of the communication researches have been diversified. An examination of the research materials indicates a number of problems to be solved in the future.

First, the communication research focuses its efforts on the phenomena of mass communication in the main and overlooks human diversities in the communication. This is because the communication researches in Korea started with concerns with the mass communication and communication science is inseparable from the tasks of bringing up journalists. However, the communication science should be maintained as an independent social science so that it can be levelled up as a science by the accumulation of theorizing works through the handlings of human affairs in its research field.

Secondly, it is not beneficial to the communication development that two paradigms of the research fail to show correlated performance within the sphere of communication science but only disclose an antagonistic relationship in conflict despite of their co-existence and with its expanded research field. The two paradigms should minimize their peripheral parts by covering vulnerable fields with the individual research object and method in order to provide a good basis for the science to accomodate much more social communication phenomenon and to enhance its exploratory confidence. So the approach difference

between the two should be recognized and at the same time the corelated researches should be carried out.

Thirdly, the bulk of the communication researches in Korea have tended to only introduce foreign theories and to believe blindly in such theories without any objections and questions or to search for new theories. As a result, the tendencies are that in the environment where there is a lack of understanding of foreign theories and of critical studies, some chauvinistic efforts are paid to the outright rejection of foreign theories and to the searches for Korea's nationalistic theories.

2. New Tasks of the communication Science in Korea:

An examination of the characteristics and problems in Korea's communication science so far made presents a number of pre-requisite and new tasks of the communication science for further studies as below:

First, the point is that the mode of human communication should change with the diverse new media emerging in the future. In other words the one-way communication flow by the existing mass media will be added with the two-way communication which will be made possible by the introduction of CATV. An attempt should be made to explore new theories for use by grasping new communication phenomena taking place in new media surroundings.

Secondly, the international information flow and international communication will be made even more active by

satellite communication. As a result, the international relationship will get closer and new aspects of international relationship should appear. Accordingly the communication researches should be carried out on an international level by expanding its field beyond domestic matters the existing researches have so far concentrated on.

Thirdly, therefore, the better results of the communication researches should be achieved in frequent contact with other sciences related to communication science in departure from the closed research perspectives of analyzing the impacts of the communication variable as an independent variable upon others. It is obvious that communication field should be expanded by social and technical changes. So it is increasingly necessary to explore new theories suitable to such changes.

Fourthly, it is a pressing task to ensure that the research method be given a scientific rationale in order to level up above recommendation points to an academic discipline on a solid and rationale nbasis. In other words, it is necessary to explore the research methods capable of endlessly analyzing diverse phenomena and of providing exploratory confidence in an effort to maintain the communication science as an independent social science.