The Perceived Impact of Korean University EFL Students' Video Chat Interactions with Taiwanese University EFL Students

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─── 〈국문초록〉 ───

　본 연구는 한국 대학생 영어 학습자들이 대만 대학생 영어 학습자들과 화상 대화를 한 후 화상 대화에 대한 한국 대학생들의 반응과 그 경험이 미친 효과를 연구하였다. 생활 영어 수업을 수강하고 있는 41명의 한국 대학생들이 대만 대학생들과 한 학기 동안 두 번에 걸쳐 일대일 화상 대화를 나누었다. 화상 대화를 한 후 작성하게 한 반성적 에세이를 중심으로 한국 학습자들이 대만 학습자들과 교환한 이메일과 소셜 미디어, 화상 대화 녹음 및 녹화 자료들을 부수적으로 이용하여 질적 연구 방법 중의 하나인 지속적 분석 방법으로 결과를 분석하였다. 새로운 경험에 대해 두려움을 가지고 있었던 한국 학습자들은 화상 대화 시작과 함께 대만 학습자들과 관계를 정립해가며 화상 대화를 즐기는 모습을 보여 주었다. 화상 대화는 한국 학습자들에게 영어 연습의 장인 동시에 영어를 소통의 도구로 인식하게 하는 계기를 만들어 주었으며, 서로의 문화를 알고 이해할 수 있는 문화 간 대화를 촉진시키기도 하였다. 특히, 학습자들이 일대일로, 원어민이 아닌 비원어민 또래의 EFL 학습자들과 화상 대화를 한 점과 같은 파트너와 한 번 이상의 화상 대화를 한 점이 한국 학습자들의 화상 대화 경험에 영향을 끼친 것으로 보인다.

□ 주제어
　화상 대화, 원격 협력 학습, 문화간 대화, 스카이프, 외국어로서의 영어 학습

Contents

1. Introduction

English has become the world's lingua franca. As a result, Korean EFL students have increased opportunities to meet and communicate with not only native English speakers but other non-native speakers of English with different first languages and diverse cultural backgrounds. In keeping with this global trend, the Ministry of Education[1] issued two major objectives for studying English in Korea. One was to improve students' communicative competence and the other was to improve students' intercultural competence. The curriculum also emphasizes the significance of developing students' abilities to effectively communicate with people from various cultures and backgrounds.

Needless to say, providing students ample opportunities to meet and interact in English with people from various cultures can help them

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1) Ministry of Education, *Primary·Secondary School Curriculum,* MOE, 2015.

understand what it really means to communicate in English as a lingua franca. The recent developments of technology, and especially the Internet actualized this by linking students interculturally and intercontinentally. The term coined by researchers that describes this is telecollaboration. Telecollaboration basically means "internet-based intercultural exchange between groups of learners of different cultural/national backgrounds set up in an institutional blended-learning context"[2] and has been recognized as an effective way to improve students' language proficiency and to develop their intercultural communication competence.[3] Thus, researchers have argued for including this technological mediation form in foreign language classrooms.[4][5]

   To date, much research has been conducted on text-based intercultural online exchanges and has found benefits and challenges for linking learners interculturally.[6][7] However, a relatively small number of studies exist on what language learners experience during their intercultural synchronous video interactions.[8] Even fewer studies have explored students' intercultural video chat interactions in which they freely communicated with other EFL

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2) S. Guth, & F. Helm, "Developing multiliteracies in ELT through telecollaboration", *ELT Journal* 66/1, 2011, p.42.

3) R. Kern, "Technology as Pharmakon: The promise and perils of the Internet for foreign language education", *The Modern Language Journal* 98/1, 2014, pp.340-357.

4) E. Y. Çiftçi, & S. Perihan, "The role of telecollaboration in language and intercultural learning: A synthesis of studies published between 2010 and 2015", *ReCALL* 30/1, 2018, pp.278-298.

5) S. Bax, "CALL—past, present and future", *System* 31, 2003, pp.13‐28.

6) G. Stockwell, & M. Harrington, "The incidental development of L2 proficiency in NS-NNS email interactions", *CALICO Journal* 20/2, 2003, pp.337-359.

7) R. O'Dowd, "Understanding the "Other Side": Intercultural learning in a Spanish-English e-mail exchange", *Language Learning & Technology* 7/2, 2003, pp.118‐144.

8) R. O'Dowd, & B. O'Rourke, "New developments in virtual exchange for foreign language education", *Language Learning & Technology* 23/3, 2019, pp.1‐7.

students using English as a lingua franca. Thus, the current study attempted to investigate Korean EFL students' experiences during their intercultural video chat interactions with Taiwanese EFL peers and the perceived impact of these experiences on them. The following research questions guided the study: 1) What are Korean university EFL students' reactions toward synchronous video chat interactions with their Taiwanese EFL peers? 2) What is the perceived impact of the intercultural video chat interactions on the Korean students? 3) What factors, if any, affect the intercultural video chat interactions?

2. Review of the Literature

As stated earlier, much research has been done on text-based intercultural online exchanges. With today's rapid development in technology, in which communication has progressed from text-based exchanges to synchronous audio or video communication tools, Kern described affordances of video-conferencing compared to text-based exchanges by stating "whereas text-based exchanges are mediated by words, symbols, and their layout, desktop video-conferencing adds voice, gesture, gaze, movement, and images of a physical setting framed by a webcam."[9]

One of the earlier attempts to link students cross-culturally using video was done by Coverdale-Jones[10]. Coverdale-Jones[11] engaged German English language learners in a German university and English students of German in the UK in different kinds of role plays via video-conferencing.

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9) R. Kern, op. cit., p.344.

10) T. Coverdale-Jones, "The use of video-conferencing as a communication tool for language learning: Issues and considerations", *Journal of Language Learning Technologies* 32/1, 2000, pp.27-40.

11) ibid.

The students showed positive reactions toward this intercultural video-based communicative project: They found the video conferencing tool to be more personal and interactive than telephone and email because they could see each other; they also found it very advantageous due to its affordances of connecting anyone in the world with no travel expenses. The researcher concluded that when used with proper guidance, language learning through video conferencing can provide greater authenticity than language learning in traditional classroom contexts. Jauregi and Bañados[12] investigated virtual interactions via video between Spanish learners from the Netherlands and pre-service native teachers of Spanish in Chile. They found that the participants' perceived motivation to communicate in and learn the target language has increased and that the participants became well aware of their own cultures as well as their respective cultures. Similarly, in a more recent study, Gennaro and Eugenia Villarroel Ojeda[13] found telecollaboration between Spanish learners in the US and English learners in Chile to be effective in improving the participants' motivation to study the target language and develop intercultural awareness. Fuchs[14] investigated telecollaborative exchanges between graduate students in Hong Kong and EFL student teachers in Germany using various types of technology tools including Facebook, Skype, and WeChat. Although the participants in Fuchs' study experienced logistical and technical difficulties, majority of them showed high levels of engagement in social interactions and understood the advantages of synchronous communication tools.

In the Korean context, Jung and Cheon[15] investigated Cyber University

12) K. Jauregi, & E. Bañados, "Virtual interaction through video-web Communication: A step towards enriching and internationalizing language learning programs", *ReCALL* 20/2, 2008, pp.183-207.

13) C. M. D. Gennaro, & Y. Eugenia Villarroel Ojeda, "Chile — U.S.A.: A case study of telecollaboration", *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2/2, 2019, pp. 166-179.

14) C. Fuchs, "Critical incidents and cultures-of-use in a Hong Kong-Germany telecollaboration", *Language Learning & Technology* 23/3, 2019, pp.74-97.

students' reactions about their video-conferencing with native English-speaking teachers. The students reported technical difficulties including frequent Internet disconnection problems and frustrations due to logistical issues, such as having different native-speaking teachers every time they have telecollaborative session. Although the students felt that these problems made the sessions not very effective, most of them held relatively positive attitudes toward their telecollaborative experiences of having them use the language that they learned previously. Korean and Japanese EFL learners in Chang[16]'s study showed their satisfaction toward participating in both online chatting and video-conferencing using English, in particular, in terms of improving their linguistic and cultural competences. Through this project, Chang argued that interactions between non-natives in EFL contexts can be beneficial and effective in their language learning processes. Jeon and Lim[17] examined video-conferencing between Korean and Taiwanese EFL elementary students. Both groups of children watched lessons about both cultures via video and also had opportunities to communicate in English via video conferencing. After the interactions, the Korean students showed an increased level of cultural knowledge about Taiwan in their interviews. The students' English speaking abilities also improved in terms of accuracy, complexity, and fluency.

Not surprisingly, not all the telecollaboration partnerships were found to be successful. For example, Ware[18] differentiated the groups that were

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15) S. K. Jung, & S. Cheon, "A study on the effect of an on-line English speaking program with live video conference", *English Teaching* 62/4, 2007, pp.513-539.

16) B. Chang, "English acquisition through NNS-NNS Interaction in EFL contexts: Focused on distance learning between and Japan", *English Language & Literature Teaching* 14/2, 2008, pp.1-23.

17) H. Jeon, & H. Lim, "The effects of Korean-Taiwanese students' telecollaboration on Korean students' intercultural competence and English speaking ability", *English Language Teaching* 25/3, 2013, pp.365-386.

18) P. Ware, "'Missed' communication in online communication: Tensions in a German-American telecollaboration", *Language Learning & Technology* 9/2,

more successful in their intercultural communications and the groups that were not. The author found that various factors, such as students' different expectations, social and institutional factors, and logistical constraints influenced the participants' level of engagement and motivation, thereby resulting in more and less successful telecollaborative experiences of the participants. In a more recent study, Terhune[19] linked native or near-native English proficiency teachers from the Philippines with EFL university students in Japan via Skype, and examined the students' reactions to online English tutorials. Different from the author's expectation that the Japanese students would be enthusiastic to talk with their teachers in English via Skype since they have little opportunity to use English in their own country, they lost their interests in their upcoming sessions and did not further engage in this project when they were asked to do further sessions with the teachers in their own homes. The author attributed the results to the diminution of the novelty effect, lack of specific goals and autonomy, or not being used to learning English via computer technology.

As shown above, an increasing number of studies have been investigated telecollaborative partnerships via video in the last twenty years. However, as pointed out by researchers, such as O'Dowed and O'Rourke[20], there still needs to be more in-depth context-specific research conducted on the topic in order to promote language practitioners' understandings about telecollaboration between people with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

2005, pp.64 - 89.

19) N. M. Terhune, "Language learning going global: Linking teachers and learners via commercial Skype-based CMC", *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 29/6, 2016, pp.1071-1089.

20) R. O'Dowd, & B. O'Rourke, op. cit.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants and Setting

The participants were 41 Korean students (38 females and 3 males) enrolled in required conversational English courses in a university of education that trains future elementary school teachers. The students were first semester freshmen. None of these students had study abroad experience. The course was provided to these students to improve their basic conversational skills, and it dealt with everyday conversational English including introducing oneself, describing families, expressing one's emotions, and describing past experiences. In order to provide the students with an authentic opportunity to use English as a lingua franca, these students were given a course assignment in which they were required to participate in synchronous video chat interactions with Taiwanese EFL students.[21] The Taiwanese students were majoring in either International Business or Children English Education and were enrolled in their practical English classes. Except for one student who had studied abroad some time, all the Taiwanese students had studied English as a foreign language in Taiwan. They were also doing this video chat project as a course assignment. The program used for the video chat interactions was Skype. Skype was chosen as the medium of communication because it is known to be easy to use and available online for free.

3.1.1 First Step: Making Contacts via Email

Before starting the Skype project, the Taiwanese partners' email addresses were randomly distributed to each Korean student. The students

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21) The exchange was initiated by using the researcher's connection with the instructor in Taiwan. He was kind enough to provide his students one additional alternative assignment besides Skype Talk to match the number of the Korean students.

were instructed to send an invitation letter to their Taiwanese partners in English to set up a time for a Skype Talk, as shown in the excerpt below.

[Excerpt from One of the Email Exchanges]

> Hello~^-^ Nice to meet you. My name is Sunhee. Though I can't speak english well, I'd like to make the best use of this opportunity and be your friend. Since the time delay of Korea and Taiwan is only 1 hour, I believe it will be easy for us to set up time to meet each other via SKYPE. Please set up time and date that you are easy to communicate with me!
> 안녕하세용~~~ ^ ^ I'm Silvia. Nice to meet you! We still have our mid-term exam this week. Will it be okay to start our project next week? I am free every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 7pm~10pm! Nothing to do on weekends so anytime! My Skype ID is Silvia1111. Hope to talk to you soon! BTW I know a little Korean so we can also use Korean if it's hard to say in English!

The students were also asked to submit transcripts of their email exchanges via email, along with their reflective essays and recordings of conversations. The students exchanged several emails in order to find a time that they would both be available. Some students started contacting each other using other SNS services, such as Facebook accounts out of convenience.

3.1.2 Second Step: Procedure

Before the students have their first video chat interactions, during the class time, the researcher called the course instructor in Taiwan and introduced him and the students to the Korean students via Skype. A few students from both countries asked some questions. This was done to demonstrate to the students how Skype Talks can be done, as well as to reduce their anxiety by showing each other's faces. When the two parties determined a mutually-agreeable time, they had to meet via Skype at least twice during the semester and talk for more than 20 to 30 minutes per session (for the actual Skype talk scene, see Picture 1). The time limitation was set up after discussing with the students because some of the students

did not believe that they would be able to talk to a foreigner and a stranger only in English for such a long time. The participants were each required to record their conversations and write a reflective essay after finishing this project. Some topics for their interactions were provided for the students to start their conversations based on their English lessons. The topics included introducing themselves, talking about their families, their university lives, and traveling. Besides these suggested topics, the students could talk about anything they wanted. The writing prompts for the reflective essays were also provided in advance in order to help them write their essays more effectively and smoothly. The writing prompts included their general impressions about the interactions, whether they enjoyed them, and the impact of the interactions on their English. The students were also encouraged to write down other relevant observations regarding the interactions. Furthermore, the students were told that they were all going to receive the same points for their reflective essays in order to ensure they write their reflections as honestly and openly as possible. The students had a choice of writing their reflective essays either in English or Korean in order to help them freely relate their intercultural chat experiences. Therefore, some of the participants chose to write their reflective essays in English. When the students' comments in English are presented in Results, they are presented verbatim.

[Picture 1] Screen Shot from the Actual Skype Talk

3.2 Data Sources and Analysis

Qualitative research methodology guided the study because it helps the researcher to see "experiences from the informants' perspectives."[22] The primary source of data was the participants' reflective essays that were from one to two pages length. The supplementary sources of data came from email exchanges, exchanges in online social networks, and the recordings of their Skype conversations. These supplementary sources of data helped the researcher to understand the students' reflective essays and their video chat experiences better and develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena.[23] Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method.[24] The researcher read the students' reflective essays repeatedly and underlined phrases and words that kept showing up and were related. While reading the participants' reflective essays one by one, the researcher went back to some of their email messages and listened to their recordings of conversations in order to understand their experiences better. The researcher compared each participant's experience in the data with other participants' experiences in order to find similarities and differences until themes emerged. Finally, in order to provide careful and detailed descriptions, the participants' various voices in verbatim quotes were provided in Results (pseudonyms were used).

4. Results and Discussion

This section starts with a brief summary of video chat interactions (4.1)

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22) R. C. Bogdan, & S. K. Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theories and Methods* (4th ed.), Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2003, p. 7.

23) M. Q. Patton, "Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis", *HSR: Health Services Research* 34/5 Part II. 1999, pp. 1189-1208.

24) J. Corbin, & A. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (3rd ed.), Sage Publications, Inc., 2008.

and presents the findings of the study's three research questions in sequential order. The findings of the first question are presented in 4.2. The findings of the second question are presented in 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5. The findings of the third question are presented in 4.6.

4.1 A Summary of Video Chat Interactions

A total of 88 Skype exchanges were completed. Thirty-seven students each had two video-chat interactions. Three students each had three Skype exchanges, and one student ended up having five Skype exchanges with her Taiwanese partner. Out of 88 Skype exchanges, 51 interactions lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, and 11 interactions lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. Another 11 interactions lasted between 40 and 50 minutes. Notably, there were 12 students who had more than an hour of Skype exchange overall. The shortest Skype exchange was 18 minutes and the longest was an hour and a half.

[Table 1] Number of Skype Calls Sorted by Talk Time

Skype Time (minute)	Less than 20	20–30	30–40	40–50	50–60	More than 60	Total
No. of Skype calls	1(18 min.)	51	11	11	12	12	88

4.2 Students' Reactions toward the Video Chat Interactions with Taiwanese EFL Students

4.2.1 An Overwhelming Feeling in the Beginning

Many of the participants reported that they felt apprehensive about participating in video chat interactions with foreign students in the beginning. Although these participants were exposed to early English education, having little experience interacting with real foreigners-other than their native English-speaking teachers-entirely in English seemed to

have bothered them. Excerpts from some of the students' reflective essays show what was going through their minds when they were informed about impending online exchanges with Taiwanese students:

"When I first found out about the project, I felt apprehensive about participating in it because I had never studied abroad nor had talked to foreigners for a sustained period of time in English. I was worried and kept saying to myself, "Can I really talk to a foreigner alone for several minutes?" and "What should I say?" I remember sending the first email to my partner after hours of agonizing of rewriting and thinking" (Mi-Na, Translated).

Some students who had never used Skype before also showed some anxiety before starting this project. Jung-mi, one of the participants, expressed her overwhelming feelings about participating in this exchange. It seemed that her unfamiliarity with Skype on top of the idea of talking to foreign students entirely in English bothered her:

"I felt overwhelmed in the beginning because, at the time, I did not know what Skype was nor I ever used it before. On top of that, I was not confident about speaking English with anybody. So, I was worried" (Jung-mi, Translated).

Not all the participants were apprehensive about doing this project. A small number of the students who had experienced early frequent exposures to foreigners showed their excitements from the very beginning. For example, Dong-Mi expressed her feelings toward this project in her reflective essay. She ended up doing her Skype exchanges more often than was required, that is, three times. She stated:

"When I hear skype project on class, I felt excited than scared. Actually, I had many experiences about talking with foreigners directly or by Internet. I attended a language institute that have only native-speaking instructors. And,

I had many opportunities to learn English over the phone or by Skype thanks to my parents… I and my taiwanese partner had total 3 skype conversations."

4.2.2 Change in Students' Attitudes toward the Intercultural Video Chat Interactions

Not long after the first video chat interactions started, all the participants who were quite apprehensive about participating in the interactions reported that their attitudes toward their experiences had changed. The participants seemed to quickly adjust to the new learning environment once their first online interactions started. This finding is not surprising considering the fact that this group of participants is a generation of avid users of recent technology. The following students' reflections show the students' changed attitudes toward their Skype Talks with Taiwanese partners. Most of the students' reflections echoed these comments:

"When I first heard this skype project, I thought this project is hard for me. I haven't experienced to talk foreigner by video call and I am not proud of my English speaking skill. However, after I talked to Sarah did video call, my fear disappeared and appear proud" (Ji-Woo).
"When I heard professor's presentation about 'Skype project', I felt pressured …Unlike my worry, Skype was really a lot of fun!" (Hae-Sook).

Hyun-Jung also showed a completely different attitude after the Skype Talk was over. She not only enjoyed the telecollaborative communication but expressed gratitude for this rare opportunity. She stated:

"I was worried whether I was able to really communicate with a foreigner one-on-one entirely in English. However, now, I am so grateful for having this opportunity to get to know Amy from Taiwan. Talking with a foreigner was not as scary as I had expected" [Translated].

Another student, Jae-Yoon who was quite nervous about doing this project even stated that she wanted to keep in touch with her Taiwanese partner even after this project was over and connect their future elementary students via Skype so their students would be able to experience the same thing.

4.3 Authentic Opportunities for Students to Use English and to Understand English as a Means of Communication

Previous research on intercultural online exchanges has shown students' language development.[25)26)] The study's participants started using English in this project when they wrote emails in order to schedule a time to meet up via Skype. Also, besides having two video chat interactions, they frequently exchanged messages in English via the Line messenger service, Facebook, and other social media platforms. Thus, although the current study did not directly investigate the students' language development as a result of participating in these interactions, it would be safe to say these participants were constantly practicing their English throughout this project, thereby helping them improve their English skills. In this process, these students seemed to appreciate the authentic opportunities to use English and to gain a first-hand understanding of using English as a means of communication, not just as an academic subject. Many participants reported that although they have been taught throughout their whole lives that the objective of learning English is to use English as a means of communication, they never really understood it until this very experience. Sung-A stated, "I honestly thought that I would never really use the English that I had studied in school" [Translated]. Similarly, Jun-Ki stated, "This Skype was very fun because I had a time to speak English for real. It was not boring

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25) G. Stockwell, & M. Harrington, op. cit.

26) K. Kitade, "The negotiation model in asynchronous computer-mediated communication", *CALICO Journal* 23/2, 2006, pp.319-348.

as just talking with someone just to practice English." Some of other related comments are provided below:

"After participating in this activity, I think I can and will be able to tell my elementary students why they have to study English. I would like to offer my future students a similar experience to the one that I had" (Ji-Young, Translated).

"Learning a English is not easy for student who live in a country that didn't speak a word of English. this is a good opportunity to talk with other person in English and I became more confident...I hope my students study English as a means of communication and have many foreign friends" (Min-Ji).

4.4 Establishing Virtual Friendships

Although the participants had culturally and linguistically different backgrounds and they have never met in person, use of English and of the Skype communication tool seemed to connect them instantly. Because they could see each other through the webcam on their computers, the students were able to engage in playful interactions as if they were meeting face-to-face. In addition, the fact that they were all non-native English speakers of a similar age who were learning English as a foreign language seemed to allow them to make connections quickly on a personal level. This might be one of the very reasons that these students showed completely different reactions from the Japanese students in Terhune[27]'s study who showed less enthusiastic attitudes toward Skype interactions with Native English proficiency teachers from the Philippines. As presented below, the participants were not hesitant to use the word "friend" in their reflective essays.

"I am so happy that I have a **friend** in another country. It was so fun talking

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27) N. M. Terhune, op. cit.

about Korean and Taiwanese celebrities and our everyday lives showing our pictures via online" (Jang-Mi, Translated).

"I really enjoyed doing the Skype activity. I was able to not only practice English but also make a new **friend**-even a foreign **friend** through this activity. My Skype partner was at my age. We were both university students and shared similar interests" (Sun-Jin, Translated).

"We could talk constantly and I believe we became **friends** pretty quickly (we were not awkward at all)" (Ju-Hyun, Translated).

4.5 Fostering Intercultural Dialogue

Consistent with previous studies,[28][29] the Skype intercultural exchange allowed these participants to appreciate their own culture as well as Taiwanese culture. Because the conversation partners were from different countries, it seemed natural for them to be engaged in intercultural dialogue. Although Taiwan is located a short distance from Korea, many of the Korean participants did not know about Taiwan, its people, and culture. Thus, they had ample opportunities to learn about Taiwan through self-study before their online exchanges and through Skype exchanges. Their conversation topics regarding culture varied from more serious topics, such as history and politics, to lighter themes, such as food. They also talked about their families, their dreams, as well as their childhoods. Through these conversations, the students seemed to naturally see the similarities and differences between two cultures in many different aspects, as shown below:

"Before the second Skype session, I took time to study about Taiwan and its culture and learned many new things. The Skype project helped me to view the world with new eyes and understand each other's respective cultures naturally" (Hyun-Ah, Translated).

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28) R. Godwin-Jones, "Telecollaboration as an approach to developing intercultural communication competence", *Language Learning & Technology* 23/3, 2019, pp.8 - 28.
29) R. O'Dowd, op. cit.

"Frankly, before this project, I did not even know where exactly Taiwan is located. In addition, I did not know anything about Taiwan and I just assumed that the way people live in Taiwan would be similar to the way people live in the Philippines...However, different from my initial thought that we were going to be completely different, there was not much difference in our school lives and how we like celebrities. It was also fun to get to know our differences in food, weather, and lifestyles" (Yae-Jin, Translated).

Interestingly, some students naturally exhibited cultural sensitivity toward another culture even though they were not explicitly taught about it. For example, some students reported that she purposely did not bring up the issues, such as the relationship between Taiwan and China and the relationship between Korea and Japan because they thought that those topics might be too sensitive to talk about:

"I found it embarrassing that I did not know much about Taiwan...My skype partner asked me if I had known anything about Taiwan. All I know about Taiwan is that it was a part of China long ago, and it had become independent by the difference of ideology, so after Korea made a diplomatic relationship with China, diplomatic relationship with Taiwan has broken...but if I say that, in my guess, she won't be very happy. So, I said I know nothing about Taiwan" (Kyung-Jin).

4.6 Factors Affecting the Intercultural Video Chat Interactions

4.6.1 Effects of Having Non-native EFL Peers as Skype Partners

The video chat interactions with non-native peers seemed to provide a safe environment for the students to express their thoughts free from the fear of negative evaluations by Korean peers and their teachers. This point is well illustrated by Eun-Joo in her reflective essay:

"I am a shy person. I think too much about what other classmates think of

my English pronunciation, so I tend not to speak up in class. But my partner is Taiwanese, so I felt comfortable speaking English with her" [Translated].

The participants also reflected on the fact that they were all non-native English speakers of a similar age who were learning English as a foreign language seemed to relieve their anxieties about using English. Sae-jin stated, "I was worried at first, but I felt a little relieved knowing that my Skype partner was going to be another non-native speaker who is studying English as a foreign language" [Translated]. Hyun-Jung also reported, "Because my partner's English was not as good as that of native English speakers, I felt very comfortable and had fun talking to her" [Translated].

4.6.2 Effects of Having One-on-One Interactions and of Frequency of Having Skype Exchanges

The fact that the participants communicated via Skype one-on-one seemed to maximize the participants' opportunities to improve their English proficiency by letting them constantly to be engaged in meaning negotiation in order to make themselves understood. Regardless of their English proficiency and their personalities, they had to be responsible for the entire interactions since they were interacting one-on-one. Additionally, having at least two sessions of Skype Talks brought big changes in the students' attitudes, as is stated in the first part of the Results section. The majority of the participants reported that their second Skype session was much more productive and longer in chat time than their first Skype session. The students felt shy and awkward in their first online meeting. Between the first and second chat session, many of the students interacted freely via various online messenger tools and got to know each other better. They also reported that their confidence had increased by the time the second session started. This helped them to have more interesting conversations in the second session. Having multiple online interactions also seemed to help them

to become closer and establish virtual friendships within a relatively short time. Jin-Seo stated:

"I felt less nervous in the second Skype session than the first one. In addition, because we had some information that was exchanged during the first session, the second session went more smoothly and it was more interesting" [Translated].

As stated by Jin-Seo, their conversation topics during their first online exchanges and while exchanging through Social Networking Services became their conversation starters or topics that sustained their online communications more smoothly and interestingly. Ji-Hae stated:

"After the first Skype Talk, I stayed in touch with my Taiwanese friend and she told me that she had insomnia that kept her awake often. She also told me that she was not feeling well because she was having nightmares. So, in our second online exchange, I gave her some tips that might help her beat insomnia" [Translated].

5. Conclusions and Implications

In order to provide the students with an authentic opportunity to use English with other L2 learners, the Korean university EFL students participated in video chat interactions with Taiwanese university EFL students. This qualitative study investigated Korean participants' reactions to the interactions and the perceived impact of these experiences on them. As for the participants' reactions toward the video chat interactions, most of them felt apprehensive and overwhelmed at the thought of participating in the interactions with Taiwanese students. However, the participants quickly adjusted to the new learning environment once their first online interactions started.

In regards to the perceived impact of these experiences on them, through the interactions, the participants gained increased understanding and experiencing of English as a means of communications, rather than simply as an academic subject. Furthermore, the participants had ample opportunities to be engaged in authentic intercultural dialogue, thereby increasing chances of acquiring intercultural understanding. By doing so, the students became more knowledgeable and able to comprehend more about their own culture and also about another culture. The students in this study also became closer and built rapport within a relatively short time. Although it was online, talking face-to-face seemed to help these participants instantly connect to each other.

As shown in Results, having one-on-one interactions which allowed the students to be responsible for all interactions and having more than one Skype exchanges appeared to affect these students' aforementioned positive experiences during the project. Having non-native EFL Peers as Skype Partners also appeared to contribute to the students' willingness to have interactive interactions by relieving their anxieties about using English.

As for the theoretical implication of this study, the study's findings provide additional evidence to support the viewpoint in the literature that telecollaborative partnerships between non-native EFL learners can be as beneficial for the learners[30][31] as those between native and non-native speakers.[32][33] As for the practical implications of the study, its findings can provide language instructors with knowledge of what to expect of their students' intercultural video chat experiences with other L2 learners, thereby increasing their students' chances of having more effective intercultural interactions. The study's implications also deal with its logistics aspects when implementing an intercultural project like the one that

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30) B. Chang, op. cit.

31) H. Jeon, & H. Lim, op. cit.

32) T. Coverdale-Jones, op. cit.

33) K. Jauregi, & E. Bañados, op. cit.

was introduced in the study. The key to success is for instructors to implement this kind of project as smoothly as possible so that the students could maximize its potential benefits. Because intercultural projects involve two sides, the instructor should have multiple conversations with the other side's instructor before, during, and after the project regarding the project's procedures in order to prevent confusion. The instructor also should be available during the duration of the project for consultations with students regarding procedures and difficulties that arise.

Finally, the study has its own limitations. The study involved a fairly small sample of the Korean university EFL students who mostly had positive experiences of interacting with Taiwanese EFL students online. Although an effort was made to provide comprehensive understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the participants, the study also has a limitation of depending on self-reported data. Hence, a sample of participants with different characteristics and using different research methods may yield different findings.

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□ Abstract

The Perceived Impact of Korean University EFL Students' Video Chat Interactions with Taiwanese University EFL Students

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The study investigated Korean university EFL students' experiences during their video chat interactions with Taiwanese university EFL students and the perceived impact of these experiences on them. Forty-one university students formed tandem dyads with Taiwanese EFL students and participated in synchronous video chat interactions during the semester. The primary source of data was from the participants' reflective essays. The supplementary sources of data came from email exchanges, exchanges in online social networks, and the recordings of Skype conversations. The constant comparative method was used for data analysis. The findings showed that the participants who felt apprehensive at the onset of the project quickly adapted to a new online environment and enjoyed chatting with their partners. The intercultural video chat interactions provided the students with authentic opportunities to use English and to understand English first-hand as a means of communication, not just as an academic subject. The interactions also afforded the participants a chance to foster their intercultural dialogue, thereby increasing chances of acquiring intercultural understanding. Furthermore, the effects of having more than one one-on-one exchange with non-native EFL peers appeared to affect the students'experiences.

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