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An Investigation of Korean College Students' Perceptions of Interactions During Remote Courses Caused by COVID-19

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The aim of this study was to investigate specific examples and suggestions related to the personal experiences of university students during remote courses. A total of 148 first-year students completed a semi-structured qualitative survey composed of 13 questions to determine their reflections and perspectives towards their first semester of remote learning; then, the data was analyzed through thematic, descriptive, and inductive analysis procedures with non-statistical analysis. Key findings are as follows: First, students felt that interactions could be completed more effectively if multiple modes of communication were utilized. Second, efforts should be made by the professor to encourage more student interactions, with students suggesting that an increase in verbal communications, better organizations, more coordination, and improved monitoring of students could be accomplished through holding more synchronous classes, expanding the number of speaking activities, and employing more teacher demonstrations and so on. Third, students realize more personal efforts and ownership of student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions are needed to interact with a larger number of peers in their classes, but also there is presently a large desire to include more real-time and verbal interactions. Specific comments and examples related to what students experienced and suggested for improving future online classes are discussed.

[Online classes/Interactions during online classes/English as a foreign language/ General education/College students]

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I. INTRODUCTION

For decades, many scholars in the field of Education have spent a great deal of time and energy analyzing and discussing the many layers of Online Learning. Whether it was for blended/hybrid or fully remote classes using e-Learning and/or Learning Management Systems (LMSs), these academics have explored a number of different factors that could affect the different interactions between teachers, students, and technology during a virtual course. Included amongst these key studies were topics such as interactions between students their professors and peers (Allo, 2020; Mamattah, 2016), analyzing ways in which professor could better interact with their students (e.g., refining teacher instruction, design, and language or increasing classroom engagement, communication skills, and confidence for both instructors and pupils) to improve online classes (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Halim & Hashim, 2019; Wang & Vasquez, 2012;), or identify specific obstacles or barriers which occur (e.g., change from face-to-face classes to using e-Learning systems, learn new technology quickly, & poor internet) to make virtual courses better and run more smoothly (Al Zumor, Al Refaai, Eddin, & Al-Rahman 2013; Basri, Hussian, & Modayama, 2021; Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020; Talebian, Mohammadi, & Rezvanfar, 2014). However, no matter the specific theme, the primary objective was to improve the overall experiences of Online Learning.

Yet, since early 2020, this field of study has experienced an explosion of interest from researchers across the globe. The reason for this increased emphasis on Online Learning is directly related to the outbreak of the COVID19-pandemic. The rapid spread of the Coronavirus in early 2020 resulted in many teachers and students leaving their familiar face-to-face classroom surroundings to embark on unfamiliar remote learning settings to maintain safety and prevent the further spread of the virus, but the quickness at which these changes needed to be made led to a difficulty in adjusting and adapting for everyone involved in this new reality (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Cruickshank, 2020; Famularsih, 2020; Mishra, Gupta, & Shree, 2020; Rohman, Marji, Sugandi, & Nurhadi, 2020; Sujarwo, Sukmawati, Akhiruddin, Ridwan, & Siradjuddin, 2020). Another result brought about by COVID-19 was the fact that academics in the field of Education now had a brand new and extremely large population of educators and pupils who would be able to share their own perspectives and experiences related to remote learning leading to a bevy of research studies being published on an array of topics related to Online Learning during the Coronavirus pandemic. For example, scholars from across the globe investigated themes such as the commonly shared challenges that both students and teachers experienced interacting with one another due to technical difficulties (e.g., poor internet quality) during

remote classes (Alturise, 2020; Basri et al., 2021; Mahyoob, 2020), the barriers that educators faced when attempting to design and implement their curriculums (e.g., planned to use a variety of tools but found spreading the materials to be challenging) leading to a realization it is not easy to transition all aspects of an offline to an online class (Famularsih, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020), and the lack of student satisfaction with the number of interactions with their peers and professor during online classes (Famularsih, 2020; Mahyoob, 2020; Nartiningrum & Nugroho 2020).

Within the context of South Korea, its proximity to China made it to be one of the first places affected by the Coronavirus. In response, the Korean government quickly determined that social distancing measures needed to be enacted, which meant that all schools would implement virtual learning (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Specifically, at the university level, where the Spring semester starts on or around March 2nd, the late decision to change to Online Learning caused several problems. For instance, many instructors who were unaccustomed to online instruction lacked the ability or knowledge on how to disseminate their lectures, while for students, especially for the incoming freshman class, the last-minute notices and changes resulted in frustration and complaints related to a number of factors (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Meanwhile, the institutions they tried to walk a fine line where they adhered to all the government guidelines while also trying to make sure that all faculty, staff, and students were informed with the latest information and provided support to overcome any challenges.

It is within this context that this study took place. Specifically, the purpose of this project was to elicit the perspectives, experiences, and suggestions of second-semester freshman students based on their multiple interactions (i.e., technology, students, and professor) during online classes. In particular, this study attempted to go beyond the general findings of other projects and instead uncover and share specific examples and experiences of the participants within a Korean context. In order to guide and organize this project, three research questions were developed:

1. What perspectives, experiences, and suggestions did Korean college students have related to the technology interactions they encountered through remote learning due to COVID-19?
2. What perspectives, experiences, and suggestions did Korean college students have related to the student-professor interactions had during online classes caused by COVID-19?
3. What perspectives, experiences, and suggestions did Korean college students have related to student-to-student interactions had during online classes caused by COVID-19?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Online Learning Context Pre-COVID-19

Since the innovation of the internet and within today's highly globalized and interactive planet, it is not a surprise that technologies like the cellphones, Social Network Services (SNSs), and communication applications such as WhatsApp, Skype, or KakaoTalk play a pivotal role in our day to day lives, especially in regards to how we connect and interact with others. As these different means of technologies have continued to grow, so has the development and implementation of specific tools for use within the field of Education. In fact, over the past decades, school and universities around the globe have found various ways to bring technology and different approaches (i.e., e-Learning (electronic learning), m-Learning (mobile learning), or d-Learning (digital learning)) to create virtual classroom settings that allow students and teachers to easily interact and achieve learning objectives (Basak, Wotto, & Bélanger, 2016; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020).

This evolution in technology and increase in the number of online lectures have coincided with scholars from around the globe producing key findings that have identified common obstacles or barriers for both students and teachers, along with suggestions to make the virtual classes run more smoothly. To begin, Wolfinger (2016) identified the current need for an increase in the number of online classes due to the desire of students to be able to study anywhere, at any time (Mahyoob, 2020). However, even when students, teachers, schools, and institutes decide to utilize virtual classrooms, debates over the best delivery systems occur. For example, while Fageeh and Mekheimer (2013) suggested that a combination of synchronous and asynchronous classes or activities would allow students to participate better (Bailey & Lee, 2020), Suranto (2009) highlighted that the true benefits of studying what you want, when you want becomes much easier and more convenient through asynchronous learning alone (Basri et al., 2021). Yet, for teachers, the selection of a delivery style or LMS to employ is just one potential challenge. Wilen-Daugenti (2009) pointed out that there is a clear need for curriculum design and classroom management practices to be instituted in the new online setting (Famularsih, 2020), but Kesler (2006) found that instructors could have challenges and negative thoughts due to trying to adapt to new technologies that they are not familiar with (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Moreover, once educators have made all of the necessary technology and course design choices, then they need to decide what is the best way to interact with their students and how will pupils interact with peers, leading to even more obstacles. For instance, Gillett-Swan (2017) suggested that the nature of online classes could make it hard to create a community (Famularshi, 2020), with Sun and Chen (2016) explaining further that there needs to be a collaboration between educators and pupils to succeed and create a more student-centered

virtual classroom setting where everyone can interact with each other (Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020). Finally, even after dedicating time and energy to preparing the very best Online Learning experience possible, everything can be undone due to poor internet access or technical problems (Al Zumor et al., 2013; Basri et al., 2021; Halim & Hashim, 2019).

2. Rise of Online Research due to COVID-19

It should be clear to see that the analysis of Online Learning has been an area of focus for many academics for the past decades, but what changes occurred due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic? In early 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the novel coronavirus, which had originated in China and had been spreading worldwide, was a crisis. Then, on March 11, 2020, WHO declared that it was now a pandemic (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020). As these notifications were occurring, individual governments were enacting their own social-distancing plans to help stop the spread. Included in many of these countries' protocols was a shutting down of schools and a transition to Online Learning which would require proper Information Communication Technology (ICT) if it had the possibility to succeed (Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020). Specifically, in South Korea, while forms of online classes did exist (Lee, 2017; Lee & Lee, 2019), and there is a large technological infrastructure in place, fully online English courses were not the standard (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Making matters worse, the sudden implementation of fully online class systems at universities in South Korea led to many challenges for school administrators and professors to determine what the technology and curriculum standards should be, ultimately leading to hardships for both teachers and students (Bailey & Lee, 2020).

Yet, despite the many obstacles experienced in South Korea and other countries around the globe, the field of Education did not stop. Instead, one of the potentially unexpected results from this explosion of online classes was that the sharp increase in the number of professor and students taking part in virtual courses allowed for academics to have a new and much larger pool of educators and learners to investigate and gather significant findings to help improve the Online Learning experiences. Unsurprisingly, the number of studies published in 2020 related to many factors of online classes caused by COVID-19 was high, which allowed scholars to find general trends during this time period that could be used to improve future virtual courses. For example, Mishra et al. (2020), whose combination of mixed methods allowed for an entire university to take a questionnaire before 20 professors and 20 students were selected for more in-depth interviews, highlighted that many of the issues experienced by students and teachers were the direct result of being unable to adjust quickly due to the short notice. While Famularsih (2020) added to the discourse through the use of descriptive qualitative methods of surveying and

interviewing 35 university students, by identifying technological interactions issues between students and professors (e.g., slow-speed internet, too many tasks, challenges with sharing or exchanging materials, or compatibility issues due to different technology tools being utilized) as a primary reason for communication breakdowns.

In addition, to challenges brought about by technology interaction issues, there were also obstacles that each group had to face when trying to contact one another. One of the biggest challenges for professors to contact their students was related to the fact that educators could have a wealth of materials that they used in their face-to-face course, but now they found it difficult to gather and disperse those details in an efficient and effective manner. Furthermore, another reality for many teachers is that their plans of using a variety of different tools and methods of communication ended up not occurring (Mishra et al., 2020). One possible reason for this barrier for the professor to interact successfully with their pupils came from Bailey and Lee (2020), who used a quantitative survey of 43 native English speaking instructors of EFL courses at universities in South Korea, and reported that professors' challenges with instruction, activity choices, and connecting with students was the result of few to no experiences with online teaching technologies before COVID-19. Similarly, when it came to student perspectives related to interactions, they were also met with barriers and frustrations. Mahyoob (2020) used a descriptive statistical analysis of 184 students at a Saudi Arabian university to show that students perceived technical, academic, and challenges during virtual lessons to be the main reasons they were not satisfied by the experience. In addition, Basri et al. (2021) employed a descriptive qualitative design of open-ended questions and interviews of 45 respondents from multiple grade levels enrolled in an English Education Study program at a university in Indonesia and noted while students understand the reason for online classes and found more advantages than disadvantages, one main issue they experienced was a heavy emphasis on writing skills rather than taking part in verbal speaking class sessions or activities.

Without question, the amount of research that was conducted during 2020, and the planned additional studies which are scheduled to take place during 2021 if classes continued to be administered online due to COVID-19, has significant potential to make drastic improvements in Online Learning. Thus far, a great amount of time and effort has been invested in looking at the perceptions of both students and teachers, using a variety of methods, which has resulted in several key general findings related to the interactions between technology, students, and teachers. However, this study hopes to expand on the general understanding by eliciting specific opinions of Korean university students, a population which currently has not been written about extensively, especially in English. In particular, the authors wanted to go beyond the general identification of interaction obstacles by utilizing individual student's experiences and suggestions to improve all interactions in the virtual class setting.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Participants and Data Collection Process

A total of 148 students, who were enrolled in a compulsory General English course at a private university in Korea during the second semester of 2020, participated in this research. The participants were recruited from 6 different sections of level-based core general English courses (i.e., 87 students from Beginner level, 54 students from Intermediate level, & 7 students from Advanced level) and are required to complete 6 prerequisite credit hours (i.e., 3 credits for College English 1& 3 credits for College English 2). All the participants were first-year students, and the large majority of the students were either 19 or 20 years old (i.e., 77%). The participants were composed of 83 female students, 46 male students, and 3 students who preferred not to give their gender, with a diverse group of majors including social welfare, nursing, foreign languages, engineering, fine arts, international sports, and so on. Finally, the participants were taking part in the College English 2 (CE2) course, which means they should have taken the College English 1 (CE1) course first, but due to scheduling choices and conflicts, students will not always have the same instructor for both CE1 and CE2. According to their responses, a total of 132 students had a different professor for CE2 than who they had for CE1, 13 students reported they had the same professor for both CE1 and CE2, and 3 students either did not remember who their CE1 professor was or they did not take the CE1 course.

Data was collected during the second and third weeks of the second semester of the Spring 2020 school year from September 8 to 16, 2020. For this qualitative research, a combination of semi-structured and open-ended qualitative questions (see Appendix) were used to create a survey that was assigned to the students to complete after the 3rd class of the CE2 class semester, with a strict deadline to earn points towards participation in the course and encourage more participation (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The questionnaire questions in this study were developed based on an extensive review of literature on remote learning and the researchers' personal experience in remote learning and teaching in the field of English education at a college both as professors. In addition, to ensure trustworthiness of the questions, the questions were reviewed by an expert in English education and remote learning (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). A questionnaire for participants' demographic information was combined with semi-structured questions and an open-ended questionnaire to elicit students' opinions about their perceptions and reflections toward their experiences during their first semester College English 1 course. The rationale being that the students would have had more time to consider the pros and cons of their CE1 experiences, plus the fact that nearly 90% of the participants did not have

the same instructor for CE1 & CE2, respondents may have felt less shy to share their opinions and examples while also shedding a wider light on more general trends. Furthermore, students were asked to fill out the questionnaire as honestly and with as much detail as possible. In particular, the open-ended questionnaire covered a range of topics mainly related to interactions participants had with technology, instructors, and peers during the Spring semester of 2020. Participants were not instructed to use a particular language to fill out the survey but were told to write multiple thoughts for each question, and any responses that were written in Korean were translated later by the researchers.

Based on the principles proposed by Jansen (2010), there are differences between qualitative surveys and quantitative surveys in that the diversity of a topic within a population is emphasized in qualitative surveys while a numerical distribution of the characteristics of a topic in a population is the main focus in quantitative surveys. Therefore, for this study, the classification of a qualitative survey was employed for the research questions to be answered through the coding of data in line with non-numeric and thematic procedures proposed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994).

2. Data Analysis

Thematic, descriptive, and inductive analysis procedures with non-statistical analysis were adopted in the analysis of the data in this study in order for the data analysis to be done on the genuine meaning of participant students' own words in order to "to reconstruct the data into a recognizable reality" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 122). In detail, a list of main themes was categorized according to the qualitative survey questions. Based on this list, sub-categories (e.g., students' specific perspectives toward on-line classes, particularly on the interactions with peers and teachers; students' suggestions for the improvement of interactions in on-line classes) were made. This list of preset categories, however, was only applied when segments of data were perfectly fit for these categories. New categories were created whenever new themes emerged. To begin with, meaningful analytic segments were investigated through the analysis of the data in order to identify new themes. Then descriptive words were applied to the segments of data to create new categories (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Lastly, all the data was organized according to the categories created from the combination of the list of preset main categories and the new categories (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) to identify the most suitable categories to answer the research questions and to serve the objective of the research through this iterative and recursive iterative process (Merriam, 1998). Furthermore, the research context and the participants' background were described in detail, and the students' own reflections and perspectives were provided in their own words to ensure trustworthiness of the data of

this qualitative study (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

IV. RESULTS

Through the analysis of the 13 major questions of the study, the following three main themes have emerged; 1) College students' interactions with technology during remote learning; 2) College students' interactions with the professor during remote learning; 3) College Students' interactions with peers during remote learning.

1. First Year College Students' Interactions with Technology During Remote Learning (i.e. Experiences and Suggestions for Improvements)

1) Identifying Which Technologies Were Used

With regards to the information in Table 1, students were asked to pick which kinds of online technologies they used in their College English 1 (CE1) course, and since the questionnaire was composed of many open-ended questions, students were allowed to pick multiple responses. Thus, the number of the responses does not mean the actual number of the participants. In addition, an "Other" option was provided to allow students to add even more context, so those answers were coded and added to the appropriate theme.

TABLE 1

Profiles of the Participants

Kind of technology used during the first-semester College English 1 (CE1) course	Total number of students who used this kind of technology
Online video lectures	106
Zoom, Google Meet, or Google Hangouts	44
Korean specific tools (i.e. NAVER Band, Café, Blog or KakaoTalk)	27
Learning Management Systems (LMSs – i.e. Google Classroom or Canvas)	3

2) Students' Perception of How Difficult It Was to Use the Technology

With regards to students' evaluation of how difficult they thought it was to use Online Technology during the CE1 course, most of the students (i.e., 125 out of 145) chose 4 or higher on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing very hard and 7 denoting very easy. This shows the students' self-reported perspective levels on the use of technology are higher than the average score (i.e., 4 out of 7 points) and implies that most of them did not have

difficulties in using technology in their CE1 learning during the previous semester. Furthermore, among all the participants, more than 55% chose 5 or higher (i.e., 82 out of 145), which suggests that students felt it moderate to very easy to use technology for their online General English learning.

Overall, the findings of the first question highlight the many different technology tools that were employed within the different CE1 classes, which does seem to follow in line with the findings of Basri et al. (2021), who suggested there would be a dilemma about which technology tool or delivery style would be best. However, the results of the second question slightly contradict the findings of Mishra et al. (2020), who suggested that the burden to learn new technologies would make it hard for stakeholders to adjust and become technologically competent. Instead, it seems that respondents in this study had an easy job adjusting to the technology used. Yet, caution is required in interpreting these results as the participants were in their second-semester, so they could be responding to their feelings after the completion of the first semester rather than at the beginning. Therefore, more investigation into how long it takes for individual students to adapt to using different technologies is needed.

3) Students' Perceptions Related to Technology Problems During CE1

Again, similar to prior research, many students commented about how they experienced many quality control issues (Famularsih, 2020) in regards to the common technical problems experienced by both students and teachers. Specifically, this included microphone and video camera problems that caused a lack of understanding and an inability to interact with their classmates, even if they wanted to. Two examples of communication issues were; First, more than one student tried to talk during a synchronous or real-time lecture, and second, when a student's audio cut out or loud noises at a student's house would interrupt the class. This caused the participants in the real-time class to miss important information, lead to discomfort, or lead to challenges in trying to share their own opinions, including the professor. These results show that students are clearly aware of the technical issues which can occur and have anxiety related to not wanting to make it difficult for others to learn.

> The screen quality and sound quality was not good to do smooth communication. (BS64)

> When I heard Professor X's lecture of CE1, I felt hard to understand the professor's talk because of the professor's bad mic. (BS45)

> However, my house was ringing, so when I had a zoom meeting, the connection was cut off a little and the sound was cut off, so it was a little uncomfortable. (BS139)

These results clearly highlight that due to an imbalance of internet accessibility or unforeseen technical issues with the hardware or software of a computer, many issues can arise. Therefore, patience and flexibility need to be shown by instructors and professors to understand the possibility of technical errors and be willing to be flexible to overcome them. However, both educators and learners should make sure they are aware of the technology they are using for potential shortcomings while also considering the environment in which they are attempting to participate in the course.

4) Students' Perceptions Towards Use of Learning Management Systems (LMSs)

In regards to the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS), student answers fell in line with the general results of prior research that they had a hard time figuring out the technology at first (Mishra et al., 2020). Specifically, it did seem that many struggled at first with how to use the different tools, but also mentioned that they could tell that this was a learning experience for both them and their professors (Mahyoob, 2020). In particular, it seemed that some LMSs, like Canvas, had a more challenging interface that confused students about where to post their comments or assignments. Furthermore, while there was student frustration related to not being able to use computers well (source), some students specified that the biggest issue they faced was the fact that they had no instruction on how to use the different LMSs. However, it should also be noted that many students explained how over time and through practice, they were able to "adjust", "adapt", or improve their abilities to use LMSs.

> When I first used e-Learning, the professor and I were unfamiliar. (BS50)

> At first time, it was very confusing for me to use technology (Canvas), because there were very many tabs, so it was difficult to distinguish notification, homework and lecture. (BS146)

> Without proper orientation to the lecture, I had a hard time submitting the assignment at first because I didn't know much while listening to the first semester of college English 1. It was hard to check attendance. (BS95)

> But I adapt this LMS. So, I can use it proficiently. (BS60)

> I am not good at dealing with computers or not, but I felt that it was a little easier because I improved my ability to handle computers by giving online lectures due to corona. (BS112)

These results clearly show that taking time to learn and develop technological skills will lead to students feeling more confident. Thus, future online classes should consider limiting the amount of different LMSs used by instructors and adding orientations on how to use the different functions for both the students and professor is needed.

5) Students' Perceptions Regarding the Use of Multiple Communication Tools

In regards to the use of multiple communication tools, students' general responses fell in line with previous research, which suggested that the use of free (Allo, 2020) and familiar communication tools, like WhatsApp (Famularsih, 2020; Mahyoob, 2020; Sujarwo et al., 2020), are not only convenient but also help students to more regularly succeed in interacting with peers and the professor. Yet, in the context of this study, many respondents highlighted the importance of the use of Korean-based communication tools and how applications like KakaoTalk, Naver Band, and Naver Café can allow for convenience, comfort, and real-time interactions between classmates or instructors. Furthermore, the specific functions of these applications sometimes allow for better and more effective studying (e.g. the save chat history function can be a powerful study aid when preparing for exams).

> Kakao talk was very friendly to me, so it was so easy. (BS47)

> And it was easy to keep up with online classes because they once again announced the contents and assignments of the classes through the "Naver Band," which we are more familiar with. (BS102)

> Hmm, first of all, the band app was convenient to use. The professor posted the class file on the post… There were not many difficulties because I was used to using the app. It was also comfortable. It was not difficult to communicate with the professor. I think it was comfortable overall. (BS111)
> By using Kakaotalk group chat room in every CE1 class, I liked that I could communicate with the professor in real-time. Also it was easy to communicate with team members in real-time without having to set an appointment. (BS152)
> I sent the assignment via Kakao Talk, and it was possible to check if the professor

saw it. (BS36)

These results are particularly significant as they suggest that professors need to examine how they can use multiple programs and tools to connect more often and regularly with their students. Moreover, educators could also benefit from thinking about which programs and tools their students are more familiar with and try to use those instead of the tools they know or like. In particular, within the Korean context, professors should develop the ability to use Korean communication tools rather than only Western programs or tools like Zoom or Google to make the students feel comfortable and confident in the way they will communicate, which should lead to more interactions in total.

2. First Year College Students' Interactions with the Professor During Remote Learning (i.e. Experiences and Suggestions for Improvements)

Overall, the respondents' comments regarding their interactions with their instructors highlighted many of the key issues experienced in other studies. Mainly, the ideas that some students felt very distant from their professor when taking online lectures, the poor audio and video quality made it challenging for students to properly interact with their instructors, the inability of professors to adapt their curriculums to an online format, and the lack of communication or feedback (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Famularsih, 2020; Mahyoob, 2020; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020; Subali, Hendrajati, & Rintaingrum, 2020) were all found in this study too. However, participant responses regarding their specific issues related to their experiences with instructors' classroom management and classroom styles, along with, their detailed suggestion for future improvements will shed more light on the limited or lack of interactions between students and professors during Spring 2020.

1) Students' Experiences Related to Classroom Management and Communication

First, related to the classroom management and communication issues experienced by participants in this study, one of the biggest issues was the lack of speaking and a heavy focus on writing skills, which is similar to the results of Basri et al. (2021). Specifically, the reliance on asynchronous or video lectures resulted in some students feeling like they were just doing "solo studying." Added to this, the fact that for many student-professor interactions during online lectures were limited to watching a video and emailing with any questions or issues led to even more distance and frustration. In particular, sometimes students would have to wait a long for the professor to see their emails and respond to them. Furthermore, there were also instances professors would post notices late or would post

them at inconsistent times leading students to feel a sense of “did I miss something? or did I do everything I was supposed to?

> I had a task to review while watching the video, so I practiced listening to English a lot, but it was also a solo study, so I felt like I was walking in place (BS49)
>
> There was no opportunity to speaking to each other through online classes. (BS93)
>
> Little interaction with the CE1 Professor. Be less interesting because pre-recorded video can limit the activity with other students. (BS41)
>
> CE 1 was not practical class; it was fine with online class. I'm not native. So, I couldn't be corrected my pronunciation and accent. (BS88)
>
> I need a quick reply from the professor to the student's question. (BS84)
>
> We need to listen and talk more. (BS135)
>
> My speaking skills always needed improvement. I was always sorry that I couldn't improve it because it was an online lecture. (BS15)

These results indicate that there is a large desire from students to have a more interactive class. While some could suggest that this simply means changing from asynchronous to synchronous instruction, the required changes are much more difficult. Namely, professors will need to be better organized and more consistent with how they distribute information and respond to student emails and questions.

2) Students’ Suggestions for Better Student-Professor Interactions in the Future

Second, related to suggestions for better student-professor interactions in future online classes, respondents seemed to focus on four key areas: 1. Professor Attitude, 2. Feedback Mechanisms, 3. Instructional Delivery and Classroom Activities, and 4. Organization and Connecting Students. Overall, it was stated that having a more “lively” and active approach could help connect instructors to their students because they will feel more invested in someone who seems to care about their education. Additionally, opening up better lines of communication will greatly help and encourage students to be more active in the weekly lessons. As noted earlier, this can be accomplished through having a variety of different

programs and tools that allow for students to contact in the way they best see fit. Furthermore, more ownership needs to be taken by the professor to regularly check all lines of communication or create designated times each day where students can easily make contact to ask questions, share concerns, or take the chance to work on their speaking.

> (I need) a lively professor's reply to a question. (BS14)

> I hope there are other means of communicating with professors than comments. (BS16)

> I hope there will be more ways to contact the professor, such as phone calls, messages, and e-mail. This is because my English skills improve with more questions and answers. (BS77)

In addition, in stay in contact better, students suggested that they want more interactions dedicated to developing their verbal skills. Specifically, it was suggested that one issue with asynchronous classes is the one-sided, lecture-based style or the fact that all the students are meeting at the same time. As mentioned earlier, this causes many interaction breakdowns due to inadequate technology or uncertainty of how to participate in such a large group. Therefore, it has been suggested that professor make smaller groups that can meet for shorter periods of time and should result in every student having the chance to develop their speaking and listening skills. Lastly, in order to enact more speaking activities, respondents in this study recognize the need for increased organization. This can begin with the earlier suggestion of using Korean programs and tools, like KakaoTalk, but should also include proactive measures where instructors are encouraging student-to-student interactions while providing contact details to make connecting easier. Furthermore, developing Q&A or FAQ posts to help solve common issues can be very important.

> I think it would be nice if the teams could chat with the professor. Questions that many people might ask would be better to use the Open board. (BS61)

> Easily show me how to understand the task more easily, easily tell me more easily so that I can understand the lesson more easily. (BS118)
> It would be great to have a section for "a summary and Q&A system for Canvas College English." Some students are not used to asking the Professor in emails so it would be great if there's a Q&A system on the condition of anonymity. (BS147)

The results of these suggestions highlight the belief that many students feel that they are not receiving enough help from their instructors regarding student-professor or peer-peer interactions. In particular, the lack of synchronous lectures or real-time classes that have a large group of students has resulted in limited to no verbal interactions for the learners. Therefore, it is imperative that professors reevaluate the design of their language courses to encourage more active communication while also developing methods to have students meet and interact more regularly to provide much wanted speaking and listening practice.

3. First Year College Students' Interactions with Peers During Remote Learning (i.e. Experiences and Suggestions for Improvements)

1) Students' Perceptions Regarding How Difficult It Was to Contact Classmates

With regards to students' evaluation of how difficult they thought it was to use contact their classmates during the CE1 course, most of the respondents (i.e., 116 out of 143) chose 4 or lower on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing very hard and 7 denoting very easy 1-7. This shows the students' self-reported perspective levels on the ability to contact classmates is lower than the average score (i.e., 4 out of 7 points) and implies that most of them did have difficulties in contacting their peers during their CE1 learning during the previous semester. Furthermore, among all the participants, more than 56% chose 3 or lower (i.e., 81 out of 143), which suggests that students felt it moderate to very hard to contact their classmates for their on-line General English learning.

Overall, these findings start to put into context and reaffirm why some students may not have enjoyed their experiences learning virtually (Mahyoob, 2020). Specifically, these results are contrary to the earlier findings related to the participants' perceptions toward the difficulty of using different technologies. Therefore, it can be suggested that as students felt more comfortable using the different communication tools for their language courses, their confidence in connecting with their peers did not increase. Thus, it is crucial to further investigate why this was the case.

2) Students' Experiences Attempting to Contact Peers

In regards to the students' experiences attempting to contact or connect with their peers, the general responses of recipients in this study mirrored many of the same results from prior research (Narininggrum & Nugroho, 2020). Additionally, the initial examples and experiences shared by participants were similar to the results of the student-professor interactions. Specifically, there was a clear desire from many students to increase the number of interactions they have with their classmates, especially through speaking

activities, similar to the suggestions of Bailey and Lee (2020) and Famularsih (2020). For example, it was suggested to have group activities where students can work together and get close, despite the fact they are participating in online classes. Furthermore, this cooperative learning approach would offer "a place" to ask questions and overcome the fear of speaking in front of others and hopefully lead to more positive interactions.

> It would have been nice to be able to conduct various activities such as reading, speaking and listening as well as writing. There was little interaction between students and professors by conducting lectures and giving assignments with only textbooks. (BS21)

> Since it was a non-face-to-face lecture, it was difficult to contact my classmates because they are not familiar with each other. (BS18)

> Negative examples can be difficult to get in touch with because you've never actually seen them before. (BS38)

> If we form a group and have a class where we can work with other friends, we will have a chance to get close. (BS138)

> If it is a group chat, students should not be ashamed to ask questions. (BS65)

> I hope we can communicate better with the students. (BS116)

These results show a clear desire from students to have a more interactive class that emphasizes more opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions and to enhance their verbal skills. Therefore, instructors of language courses should begin by making choices about curriculum design and instructional delivery that employs more speaking and listening-based activities and assignments. Yet, professors should also realize that there will be a number of students who could be fearful of taking part in classes or activities with students they don't know. Therefore, extra time should be spent at the start of the semester to build a sense of community in the classroom while also following the early suggestion of organizing and monitoring the groups to help struggling students.

3) Students' Personal Stories Related to Working with Classmates

With regards to the classroom environment and how students successfully contacted

their classmates, the use of specific familiar technologies was reconfirmed (Famularsih, 2020; Mahyoob, 2020; Sujarwo et al., 2020), with numerous respondents mentioning the Korean mobile instant messaging application, KakaoTalk, as the most effective. However, more specific examples related to the personal experiences of students working with their peers uncovered other significant factors. One important point that several participants touched on was the natural fear that comes when starting a new class and attempting to meet new students, especially as a freshman, with some suggesting that it was even more difficult than they had imagined due to the online nature of the class. Another key finding was a clear desire for students to work together with the instructor (Sun & Chen, 2016) to create a safe and welcoming environment where they feel like they can communicate easily. However, in order to reach this goal, it becomes clear that having multiple ways to contact classmates, especially those students in the class who are from different majors, is extremely important and necessary. Specifically, it was pointed out that in several CE1 classes, students would only have the names of their peers, or in some cases, may have only 1 contact detail which was not always being checked by their classmates regularly. In order to overcome this barrier, it was suggested that students provide a set of contact details, especially the ones that they use the most.

> In college English 1st class, I focused on writing, I want to improve my English speaking skills, so I hope that an environment where people can communicate in English can be created … but I think it would be nice to have time to communicate with friends and professors in order to improve my speaking skills. (BS42)

> As I communicated with other students only through comments during class, I did not know the phone number and did not know the number when I had to cooperate with other students, but I was so frustrated because I didn't reply and almost passed the submission period. (BS7)

> CE1 was operated only a naver cafe. We didn't need to contact kakaotalk or call. So we couldn't contact other students. Or we can only contact same major students I had their phone number. (BS22)

> In fact, there are students from other departments, while there are students from college English classes. Especially, some freshmen like me who entered the last semester didn't even see the motivation of their studies, so I thought it would be very hard to contact students from other departments. (BS76)

> One person slept and didn't appear in the regular hangout schedule so the others must had to wait long hours until the person woke up… It was a relief that we didn't have any other schedule after the hangout. But, if someone had other plans after the hangout, it would become complicated. (BS70)

These results once again confirm that many students want to be active, but their main obstacle to overcome is how to connect with group members or classmates, especially when they are in a language class consisting of learners from different departments. Moreover, the personal experiences of the participants in this study highlight how challenges related to late or absent group members can affect the entire team due to not have alternate means to connect with peers. Thus, steps should be taken to help disperse and share contact information. Perhaps, this is something that instructors, institutions, and students can all work together to create an up-to-date list of contacts. Doing this should make student-to-student interactions happen more smoothly, which in turn will help eliminate miscommunications and help teachers to implement other previous suggestions like doing smaller group activities.

4) Students' Suggestions for Connecting with Peers

With regards to practical suggestions related to connecting with others, respondents noted that while professors are important in helping to connect students, it was also their responsibility to be active and take ownership in connecting with peers. As mentioned previously, getting help from the instructor to start to organize the class, make a list of contact details, and take the lead in creating and monitoring groups, especially early in the semester, are all great first steps. Yet, once these procedures have been implemented, it is up to the students to energetically engage with their peers. For example, it was suggested that students could post several contact details to make it easier to get a hold of them, especially in the case of an emergency or time-sensitive assignment. Furthermore, it was pointed out that it is the responsibility of each individual student to fully understand what is expected from them on every one of their assignments, and more importantly, they should be routinely checking the status and progression of the assignment or make plans with partners to ensure that all expectations and deadlines for the tasks are met. Finally, in classes where instructors are not proactive with connecting students, it was put forward that pupils from that class should take the initiative to make their own chat group in order to stay connected with their peers.

> Every classmates share each one's various contact information to know the method to

> contact. I think it can be better to write contact information according to their platform preference when each person write that. I think making a group talk in Kakao Talk for classmates can be a good method to contact. It can be used well whenever someone has a question about lecture or assignment. (BS54)
>
> However I think it's better to open a chat room and set up a meeting time to improve the ability to contact. (BS56)
>
> I should have some information of my classmates to try contact. I should check my status of my systems. I should make the plans clear not to make misunderstands about the plans. (BS64)
>
> The way we solved that problem last semester was that we made a Kakotalk Open Chatting room only for students so we could call our classmates faster and share information about the class with each other. Or we could share our contact information in one kind of SNS and tie together in order to make conversation fast and when we need contact, to see only one SNS. (BS-144)

These results importantly show that students do not believe that all of the onus for peer-to-peer interactions in language classrooms rests with the instructor. Without question, an active professor can help to create a safe and cooperative class environment, but ultimately students also need to take responsibility for their learning. Therefore, it can be suggested that instructors dedicate the time to teach students how to be proactive with communicating in their class.

V. IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study show, while there are similar findings related to other research conducted over the past year related to general perceptions of students taking remote lectures due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Basri et al., 2021; Famularsih, 2020; Mahyoob, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020; Sujarwo et al., 2020;), they also bring to light specific perspectives, personal reflections, and future suggestions for better practices for English language classes by second-semester Freshman students at a Korean university.

The first implication of this study would be to continue to improve the technology used in English language online classes while also focusing on the use of a variety of communication programs and tools, (i.e. - LMSs, SNS, and other communication programs)

especially programs and tools widely used in a particular area. In general, focusing on lowering the number of technical issues is important, but it is also crucial that instructors, students, institutions, and government entities work together to keep everyone informed for as long as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. More specifically, in the Korean context, the use of Korean communication programs and tools, like KakaoTalk or Naver Band, should be adopted by all instructors, especially foreign professors who may be more used to Western programs like Zoom or Google, to aid students to feel more comfortable and confident when trying to use technologies for class. However, it should also be considered that having just one method to communicate with students is also not ideal, therefore utilizing a variety of tools is recommended. In particular, this means that professors, schools, and administrators should work together to develop ways in which learners can easily use multiple communication programs and interactive tools, to easily connect and interact with their instructors and peers. Moreover, finding a method to link existing technologies together could eliminate many of the challenges or barriers that both English language educators and pupils experienced over the last year.

The second implication of this study would be to encourage instructors to understand that they could be lacking in experiences related to online technologies and instruction (Bailey & Lee, 2020), but they should be attempting to improve their skills while trying to make the class more interactive. Specifically, according to the findings of this study, there is a considerable number of students enrolled in English language courses who want to build their verbal skills through real-time meetings or group activities. Thus, utilizing more synchronous classes as part of the instructor's curriculum design is a great starting point, however, this does not mean the class instruction on Zoom or Google Meet calls should be done through lectures. Instead, creating more opportunities for students to talk in real-time, either to their professor for practice or feedback or as part of activities that students can interact more with their peers, holistic (Mishra et al., 2020) experiences for learners to improve all their English skills instead of just writing. Additionally, investing time and money or getting help from the school to take tutorials on how to use different kinds of technology, or even borrowing better equipment, could aid everyone involved in English language classes to be able to adjust to using technology much more quickly. Furthermore, language instructors could greatly benefit from getting help from more experienced teachers by arranging times to meet in-person or via online meetings to increase individual knowledge while also getting the chance to meet and work cooperatively with colleagues despite the current social distancing measures. Finally, educators of English language courses should make sure to be lively or active with all aspects of their curriculums, from making the groups and connecting peers to monitoring students' participation and giving feedback, being more proactive and emphasizing a verbal driven class will fulfill the current desires of second language learners.

The third implication of this study would be to inspire students to also be more active with the way that they approach online classes. While this study reaffirmed the fact that students have familiarity with some messaging or communication applications (Famularsih, 2020; Mahyoob, 2020; Sujarwo et al., 2020), the findings also suggested that the common fear of meeting new students can be worse during online lectures. Moreover, as mentioned several times already, the current system of "solo studying" is making some students feel like they are "walking in place." Therefore, having language learners recognize the need to take ownership of their own interactions is an important first step. Yet, this will also involve being proactive and patient when it comes to exchanging contact details and taking part in a more "lively" class. In addition, learners' knowledge and stress regarding how to contact unfamiliar students can be eased with the help of their instructors (e.g. having a class group chat, collecting and distrusting contact information for all students, or making assigned groups with specific roles to encourage active participation). Furthermore, administrators and professors can lower the difficulty faced by students by offering tutorials or creating extra instructional videos that model best practices on how to meet or use specific technology tools. Finally, within the Korean specific context, increased emphasis on more Western programs and tools like GMAIL, Google Classroom, Google Meet/Hangouts, Zoom, Canvas LMS, Blackboard, etc., is desperately needed considering many Korean students are unfamiliar with these tools and programs.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the end, this study has reaffirmed several of the general perspectives of university students throughout the globe who are currently taking remote lectures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it has also built from this foundation to add important personal experiences and suggestions which have exposed the specific challenges and obstacles faced by second language learners in the Korean university context, in particular Freshman students from the class of 2020. This has led to a number of interesting findings that should help future online classes, yet there is still more work that could be done. Future research should continue to focus on the interactions between students and their technology, instructors, and classmates and determine continued best practices to have the best possible remote English language lectures possible. In addition to this, future research should also recognize that this study was limited by the specific population of second-semester freshman students reflecting on their first semester. Therefore, follow-up research can be conducted to see if there are changes to their perceptions and experiences after completing the College English 2 (CE2) course during the Fall of 2020. Additionally, the main focus of this research project was the perceptions of university students; thus future studies should investigate the opinions of

professors to see what similarities and differences can be found. Moreover, due to the fact that the methods used for this study were qualitative in nature, further research can be conducted utilizing quantitative measurements or mixed methods to uncover more connections and correlations. Furthermore, future studies could also expand the scope to include data from other General Education courses, or comparative studies analyzing the similarities and differences between one or more other nations where freshman students are taking compulsory General English courses. Finally, at some point the Coronavirus pandemic will be over and students and instructors will return to face-to-face classes, therefore, future research projects that focus on how in-person classes have changed after 2 or 3 semesters of virtual learning will be needed. In particular, analyzing how interactions from online classes will be utilized in traditional second language classroom settings or examining how interactions in face-to-face courses are organized and how information and is shared or collected post-COVID19 could be very insightful and beneficial.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

1. What is your Name? (In Korean & English). Which section are you in?
2. Which College English 2 Section are you in?
3. What is your gender?
4. What is your age?
5. What is your Major? (Please make sure to put it based on the Department - e.g. - Department of History or Department of Nursing)

6. Was I your professor when you took College English 1?
7. Which kind(s) of Online Technology did you use during College English 1? (you can pick more than one answer)
8. How easy or difficult would you say it was to use the Online Technology during College English 1?
9. Please explain in as much detail as possible, why did you give the answer for the question above. Please try to give both your positive & negative feelings towards the technology in College English 1.
10. Please explain in as much details as possible, what are some suggestions (write more than one please) you would have to improve the technology after taking College English 1?
11. How easy or difficult would you say it was to contact your classmates during College English 1?
12. Please explain in as much detail as possible, why did you give the answer for the question above. Please try to give both your positive & negative examples of how you were able to contact or failed to contact your classmates in College English 1.
13. Please explain in as much details as possible, what are some suggestions (write more than one please) you would have to improve the ability to contact your classmates after taking College English 1?

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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