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English Learning Styles Between Korean and Mongolian Students

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Although English has been required to be taught from primary school to university in South Korea and Mongolia, students can be still struggle with English. The purpose of the study was to identify the English learning strategies, styles, and preferences of Korean and Mongolian university students based on their different cultural awareness and linguistic backgrounds. The study was conducted through a research questionnaire based on different questions, designed for the needs of the research. Thus, the paper concerned the importance of learning English and even the problems, regarding students` learning styles, individual learning platforms, and linkages between the two countries. The paper also discussed the present situation in English education by exploring the fields of the study, learning difficulties, and methods. As a result, the study found the differences and similarities between students` usage of online platforms for their own unsupervised or unguided learning. Comparisons were made with regard to the students' gender, age, learning styles, and other strategies. Our findings also revealed that not only teaching and learning strategies but also face-to-face communication and education systems can be important issues depending on students` linguistic background and learning style preferences.

[English/language learning/strategies/learning style preference]

I. INTRODUCTION

The necessity of learning English has increased as a result of globalization, posing linguistic background and cultural awareness for various objectives. English is not only the standard international language in a wide variety of fields such as science, media, art, politics, scientific research, education, entertainment, business, IT, computer coding, international trade, and service but also it plays a significant role in today's society to express the feelings

and ideas without any language barriers in communication with the help of English.

As for the importance of learning English, a recent study (Ghosh, 2021) shows that there are at least 7.102 known languages alive in the world today but only 23 languages of them make up the native language of 4.1 billion people. The study's calculations also show that English has 335 million native speakers all over the world and it is spoken in 110 countries, including 1.500 million learners around the world. Another earlier study (König, 1994) emphasizes that "over 300 million speak English as a mother tongue, and at least another 400 million use English as a first foreign (i.e. second or international) language. English is the main language of newspapers and of advertising. It is the official international language of airports and air-traffic control. It is the lingua franca of international business and academic conferences, of diplomacy, of sport and it is one of the six official languages used by the United Nations" (p. 532).

Our research also follows a very recent study (Ang, 2021), based on Google`s Keyword Planner, which considers that English is not only the most popular language to learn approximately in 98 countries but also the most spoken language worldwide, as it stands in strong first with over 1.1 billion total speakers. With regards to this issue, the study (*Word tips*) calculates that English is mentioned as the most popular language in the world by 6 countries in North America, 6 sovereign states of South America, 9 countries in Middle and Central Asia, 14 countries in the Rest of Asia & Oceania, 28 countries in Africa and 34 European countries. Another recent study by Ghosh (2020) shows that nearly 43% of the world's population is bilingual and 66% of English speakers have learned it as a second language. In addition, Kross, Hargittai, and Redmiles (2021) employ over 2000 US participants` responses to examine how adults use internet sources for their learning. The study focuses on the learning activities, platforms, and tools. The study finds that YouTube is the most popular learning platform.

As for obstacles of learning English, a number of studies show that most EFL learners face the difficulties in writing and speaking. For example, Padma (2021) discusses the obstacles of learning English faced by PhD students in India and concludes that writing is very important for both teachers and students. Another study (Laffey, 2022) analyzes the writing performance of Korean students based on gamification techniques, which can be used to increase motivation by adding game-like mechanics to ordinary tasks and concludes that "more focused research such as this study, but for other language skills, vocabulary acquisition, grammar, or communicative functions may help identify the areas in which gamification can have the greatest impact on motivation to learn English" (p. 39). In addition, Kim (2022) discusses English communication skills of Korean students and emphasizes that "integrating and enhancing speech skills is essential and effective when teaching grammar and boosts students' learning of FSs in English" (p. 5).

A study (Habok, Kong, Ragchaa, & Magyar, 2021) analyzes the learning strategies used

by Hungarian, Chinese and Mongolian university students and concludes that “not all strategies can be used at once, and there are results that highlighted that effective learners use a small number of strategies depending on the learning task, but it is important that students learn and practice all strategy types, especially during the first phase of language education” (p. 6).

Following such a global trend of internalization, mentioned in this paper, this paper focuses on the importance of English, as the most important foreign language for Korean and Mongolian students. With regards to these issues, the paper will analyze the present situation of EFL learners’ learning styles preferences and the obstacles they overcome as well as the needs and goals of the learners’ learning process and strategies.

1. Objective of the Study

The objective of this paper is to discover the most preferred learning strategies and styles of the students and their online unsupervised learning process between the two distinctive groups of the countries. Besides it, the study is also aimed not only to facilitate the learning process of students in the future based on their interests and styles preferences but also to enhance the teaching strategies and methods effectively with regard to these issues.

2. Significance of the Study

This study focused on what are the problems and needs of the students` English learning process. As for analyzing the present situation in the English teaching-learning process and requirements as well as the problems they face, first of all, this study will suggest an application of effective teaching and learning methods. Second, as a result, it will give the chances to the teachers to gain insight into which areas they can do further development and how to develop a new curriculum in the future. Third, this study may fill a gap in the comparative research works and become a bridge to connect the research works between South Korea and Mongolia. Fourth, it may contribute to researchers making their further comparative studies in SLA.

3. Limitations of the Study

1) This study is limited to the issues of the English learning process of undergraduate students in South Korea and Mongolia.
2) This study only focuses on students` learning strategies and styles on how they understand the importance of learning English and what difficulty they face while

learning academic English.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A striking difference can be observed in comparing the English education system of the two countries; In South Korea, official English has been taught in all schools across the country, beginning in the third grade since 1997 whereas English education has begun in the fourth year of primary education in Mongolia since 2006. Similarly, the two countries allow children to start learning English earlier than official English education, either through private pre-schools or publicly subsidized pre-schools that all include English education in their curricula.

The Korean education system is centralized as a twelve-year system and is unified throughout the country in a 6-3-3-4 year system, concerning of nine years of compulsory education with six years of elementary school, three years of middle school, three years of high school, and four years at the undergraduate university level. Higher education consists of junior colleges (2-3 year programs), universities (4-year programs), and graduate schools (master's and doctoral degree programs). There are two semesters in an academic year; the first semester starts from March to August and the second continues from September to February. The summer vacation starts from July to August whereas winter vacation begins from December to February in South Korea.

On the contrary, the Mongolian education system has been changed into the twelve-year system since 2008, including 5-4-3-4 year system with nine years of compulsory education. Before this time, Mongolia`s school system was for a ten-year system till 2005 and then extended to the eleven-year system in 2007. The official school entrance age was allowed to 7 from 2004 and then lowered again to 6 starting in 2008. The higher education system in Mongolia is the same as the one in South Korea. However, the first semester of the school year begins in September. The summer vacation starts from June to August while the winter holiday lasts from the end of December till the beginning of February in Mongolia.

Our next important view is learning styles, preferences and strategies. Knowing their learning styles or preferences enables the learners to improve their language proficiency. In other words, it is a very important process for them. The reason is that the styles or preferences can give the chance to recognize the ways of the learning process and leads the learners to improve their language proficiency in better ways. In brief, learning styles can be visual or pictorial, auditory, reading, writing, and kinesthetic in the learning process. Based on these styles, and preferences, learners can use their effective learning strategies – cognitive, metacognitive, management, and motivational.

Cognitive strategies are used to acquire and transfer knowledge and deepen the

understanding of context and thus, they include reading, highlighting, note-taking, summarizing, paraphrasing, elaboration, organization, generation, retrieval practice, and self-testing. On the contrary, metacognitive strategies make the learners recognize their strengths and weaknesses in the learning process. They include planning learning activities, monitoring the process of studying, and evaluating the outcomes and results. Management strategies can be used to create the learners' ability to find data and evaluate contexts whereas motivational strategies can be used to engage their learning process. Hence, it is known that learning styles and strategies are important in the education system.

This reason, it can be seen in a recent study (Orosoo, 2019) which shows 88.1% of total of 210 freshmen students, 81 % of MA and doctorate students, and 81.4% of elementary-level students, were failed their exams because of their wrong learning styles and strategies of the learning process and the methods or curriculum in the education system. The study further analyzes the development of the English learning process in Mongolia. It is said that Mongolian students first began studying English since the foundation of the English Language Department, established by the Mongolian National University in 1956 but English has been officially taught at secondary school since 1992. The study says that English Language Evaluation Policy was implemented in Mongolia under the name "The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), an international standard to evaluate students' language proficiency based on six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2.

As for the development of English education in South Korea, a study (Yoo, 2005) discusses not only the importance of English in a country and how it is reflected in language policy as foreign language education but also the curriculum on English which was discussed as a first foreign language since the Second National Education Curriculum was proclaimed in 1963. The study says that extra-curricular English education started for 4th, 5th, and 6th graders in primary school in 1994. However, English became a mandatory subject for 3rd graders in primary school starting from 1997 based on National Educational Curriculum. Since 2001, with the launching of the Seventh National Education Curriculum, the Ministry of Education, an English-only policy in English education was implemented for third and fourth graders in primary schools and seventh graders in junior high school.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Participants

A total of 42 university students are invited to participate in this survey from December 2021 to March 2022 in South Korea and Mongolia. At the time of investigation, they were

all undergraduates at the university; there were 6 freshmen, 4 sophomores, 6 juniors, and 5 seniors in the Korean group whereas the Mongolian group had 16 freshmen, 2 sophomores, 1 junior, and 2 seniors. As for age and gender of the groups, there were 21 participants (12 females and 9 males) in a group of students at the Education school of ANU in South Korea, between the age of 20-28 (with an average of 22.8) whereas there were 21 participants (6 females and 15 males) at the age of 18-24 (with an average of 19.3) in the second group of students at Royal International School in Mongolia. Hence, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the ages of undergraduate students depending on the differences between official school entrance ages in the two countries.

2. Materials

This study was analyzed and discussed with the help of surveys with official statistics, relevant articles and research papers, books, SPSS statistics, and open/closed questionnaires related to the paper.

3. Results and Discussion

A survey questionnaire was carried out by online Google form with the different types of questions. There were 14 questions in the questionnaire which were supported by previous relevant studies. Students were asked to select how much they agree with each item on the questionnaire. The data collected was analyzed by using SPSS software based on descriptive statistics to identify the outcomes and results of the responses preferred by participants.

As for the itemized discussion along with all relevant details, expected outcomes, and results were analyzed and discussed below.

Item 1 was asked to know *which language would be the most important in South Korea and Mongolia.* 39.0% of the Korean students said “both English and Korean”, 39.0% stated “English” and the remaining 22.0% said “Korean”. On the contrary, 39.0% of the Mongolian students stated “English”, 14.0% stated “English, Korean and French”, 14.0% said “English, Korean and Mongolian”, 9.5% said “English, Korean and Chinese”, 9.5% said “English, Mongolian and Chinese”, 4.7% stated “English, Mongolian and Japanese”, 4.7% said “English, Korean and Japanese” and the remaining 4.7% stated “English and Mongolian”, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Performance of Item 1

Case Processing Summary				
Which language is the most important for you?	Cases			
	Korean		Mongolian	
	N	Percent	*N*	Percent
English	8	39.0%	8	39.0%
English and Korean	8	39.0%	0	0.0%
Korean	5	22.0%	0	0.0%
English Korean and Mongolian		0%	3	14.0%
English, Korean and French		0%	3	14.0%
English, Mongolian and Chinese		0%	2	9.5%
English, Korean and Chinese		0%	2	9.5%
English and Mongolian		0%	1	4.7%
English, Korean and Japanese		0%	1	4.7%
English, Mongolian and Japanese		0%	1	4.7%

Item 2 was about *foreign languages the students speak* and 47.6% of total participants of each group answered "one language", 33.3% responded "2 languages" and 19% said "3 languages". In addition, 47.6% of the Korean students said that *they can speak 2 languages*, 42.6% stated *they speak only one foreign language* and the remaining 9.5% said that *they speak 3 languages*. On the contrary, 52.8% of the Mongolian group said that *they can speak only one language*, 28.7% stated *they speak 3 languages* and the remaining 19.0% said that *they speak 2 languages*.

TABLE 2
Performance of Item 2

Case Processing Summary				
How many foreign languages do you speak?	Cases			
	Korean		Mongolian	
	N	Percent	*N*	Percent
One language	9	47.6%	11	52.8%
Two languages	10	42.6%	4	28.7%
Three languages	2	9.5%	6	19.0%

Item 3 discussed *how well the students know English.* 66.7% of the Korean students stated, "I know English well", 28.6% said "fair" and 4.7% replied as "excellent" whereas only 47.6% of the Mongolian participants responded as "well", 23.8% said "fair", 19.1% said "poor" and 9.5% mentioned it as "excellent" as in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Number and Percentage of Item 3

How well do you know English?	Reports			
	Korean		Mongolian	
	N	% of Total Sum	*N*	% of Total Sum
excellent	1	4.7%	2	9.5%
good	14	66.7%	10	47.6%
fair	6	28.6%	5	23.8%
poor	0	0%	4	19.1%
Total	21	100.0%	21	100.0%

Item 4 discussed *the level of students` language proficiency*. Out of those, 47.6% of the Korean students mentioned themselves as "intermediate" whereas 52.4% of the Mongolian students described themselves as "pre-intermediate". There was only 4.8% of each group said that *they know English at an advanced level,* respectively.

TABLE 4
Frequency and Percentage of Item 4

	What is your English language proficiency?				
		Korean		Mongolian	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	`elementary	1	4.8%	7	33.3%
	pre-intermediate	2	9.5%	11	52.4%
	intermediate	10	47.6%	0	0%
	upper-intermediate	7	33.3%	2	9.5%
	advanced	1	4.8%	1	4.8%
	Total	21	100.0%	21	100.0%

Item 5 focused on *the importance of learning English* and 95.2% of the Korean students said that "learning English is very important" but 4.8% answered that "it is not important" whereas 85.7% of the Mongolian students mentioned it as "very important", 9.5% said "I don`t know" and the remaining 4.8% responded that "it is not important", as in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Performance of Item 5

Is it important to learn English?	Reports			
	Cases			
	Korean		Mongolian	
	N	Percent	*N*	Percent
Important	20	95.2%	18	85.7%
Not important	1	4.8%	1	4.8%
I don't know	0	0%	2	9.5%

Next item was asked about *the difficult skills students face* to determine their cognitive learning styles; *visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.* In this field, the study showed that speaking and grammar were very difficult for the Korean students whereas all skills were complicated

for the Mongolian students. In addition, as for the next hard skills, the Korean students named *reading, writing, and vocabulary* whereas the Mongolian group listed *speaking, listening, and reading.* Hence, it can be known that teachers and students need to focus on their learning styles. The reason is that knowing students' cognitive learning style helps both students and teachers understand how they learn this language and what methods of teaching best fit the class. In other words, if students can improve their cognitive learning styles, they can learn the language successfully and use their brains more effectively to make connections between their new words and grammar. Thus, knowing their cognitive learning style is very important because it is not only always active, constructive, and long-lasting in life but also describes their typical mode of thinking, perceiving, remembering, and even problem-solving in the learning process.

In addition, item 7 was asked about the reasons why the students learn English. In this question, 23.8% of the Korean students mentioned that they had been learning English for communicating more effectively in so many parts of the world, 19.0% learned it for using English in daily life, 14.3% did it for many reasons such as using this language in daily, study abroad, work and presentation at school. On the contrary, 28.6% of the Mongolian students said that they had been learning English for many reasons; not only using this language daily, studying abroad, working, and presenting at school but also communicating more effectively in so many parts of the world. 14.3% answered that they learned English for working abroad in the future.

Item 8 was analyzed for *why learning English is important or what the importance of learning English is.* 23.8% of total participants in the two groups answered "it gives the chances to express the idea and communicate with other people", 21.4% responded "it improves the chances of getting a job" and "it gives the opportunities to learn about other countries cultures and expands the world view" respectively. 19% of them said "it gives them more social and global skills" and 11% emphasized "it gives the key to open the door to travel throughout the world" whereas the remaining 2.5% said, "it gives us all chance, as mentioned here". Hence, it can be seen that learning English is very important and it gives students not only the chances to get a job or to express their ideas easily but also expands their world views to travel around the world and improves their social and global skills.

Furthermore, item 8 was also analyzed for the views of two groups. In this description, the Korean students mentioned "it improves the chances of getting a job and gives the chances to express the ideas with ease and to communicate with others openly" as an importance of learning English. Similarly, the Mongolian students also mentioned, "it gives the chance to express the ideas with ease and to communicate with others openly". In addition, they emphasized "it gives the chance to learn about other cultures and expands the world view" for this question.

Hence, it can be seen that students need a wide variety of high-quality educational

knowledge and experiences which lead them to make up a global or social deep awareness and understand the importance of learning this language as well as change their lifestyles and communities in the world based on their knowledge and acquisition of English. Therefore, teachers need to develop their educational curricula, teaching methods, styles, and strategies which serve to empower their students, develop their identities and voice as well as encourage students` goals and visions of their life opportunities in the future.

Item 9 discussed *the communication they need for their learning process*. The outcomes show that 23.8% of the Korean and 19.0% of the Mongolian students preferred *communication with professional teachers at school*. Thus, it shows that students need the help of professional teachers for their learning process. As part of this process, teachers may expand their teaching strategies and methods into culturally responsive practices and more detailed informative contexts, experiences, or activities with funds of knowledge globally. In brief, teachers may model culturally responsive and socially responsible practices for students.

Item 10 analyzed *the useful methods for students' learning process* and the results showed that most students of each group mentioned both *teacher-centered and student-centered approach*. In other words, 42.9% of the Mongolian and 38.1% of the Korean students stated that "teacher-centered approaches influences their learning English" whereas 23.8% of the Mongolian and 38.1% of the Korean students mentioned "student-centered approach influences their learning English".

TABLE 6
Analysis of Item 10

Which method influences on your learning English?	**Reports**			
	Cases			
	Korean		Mongolian	
	N	Percent	*N*	Percent
teacher-centered approach	8	38.1%	9	42.9%
student-centered approach	8	38.1%	5	23.8%
game-based learning	3	14.3%	3	14.2%
personalized learning	0	0%	3	14.2%
inquiry based learning	1	4.7%	0	0%
online learning	1	4.7%	0	0%
blog	0	0%	1	4.7%

Item 11 was asked to know *students' preference of learning platforms they use* regarding their language proficiency. The outcomes performed that 9.52% of intermediate-level students prefer *face-to-face communication with native speakers* whereas 9.52% of pre-intermediate-level students *face-to-face communication with professional teachers at school*. On the contrary, 2.38% of advanced-level students preferred *online video content* and *the learning process at school* whereas 7.14% of elementary-level students preferred *movies.*

Hence, the study suggests that *face-to-face communication* is very important for all students.

Item 12 discussed the issues of *unsupervised or unguided learning processes* based on online platforms that were used for their learning English. The results said that 42.9% of the Mongolian students used *YouTube and Facebook* whereas 33.3% of the Korean students preferred *YouTube* for their unsupervised or unguided learning.

Item 13 discussed *the advantage of online platforms used for learning.* 23.8% of each group mentioned that "using online platforms is cheap and free", respectively whereas 19.0% of each group similarly evaluated that "it helps to find their solutions for learning language problems".

On the contrary, item 14 discussed *the disadvantages of using online platforms*. 52.4% of the Korean and 33.3% of the Mongolian students answered that "there is no face-to-face interaction".

To sum up, the study concluded that *face-to-face communication with professional teachers at school* is very essential for the students of each group. The reasons for this choice may be likely related to the obstacles they face and the needs why they have to learn English. That's why, although students use online video content for free or cheap, which is dedicated to the learners, they have still suffered from some difficulties or obstacles namely, time management, lack of feedback and evaluation, lack of monitoring of the lesson procedures, lack of concentration, lack of linkages between the lessons, lack of direct communication with teachers and other issues, as mentioned in this paper. On the contrary, they prefer *face-to-face communication with professional teachers at school* based on their requirements why they need to learn English.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

With regards to English learning styles, each group of EFL learners preferred the school environment learning to online video content. More significantly, this paper found that the higher levels of the students preferred face-to-face communication with native speakers whereas lower levels of the students chose face-to-face communication with professional teachers at school. Similarly, each group of students emphasized that their learning process was mainly based on both teacher-centered and student-centered approaches.

As far as gender was concerned, females showed a stronger tendency toward face-to-face communication with either professional teachers at school or native speakers while males gave more preference to face-to-face communication with only professional teachers at school. In addition, to the importance of learning English and the reasons why they have learned English as a foreign language, all subsamples of each group showed the results of some significant differences. More importantly, it may be seen that face-to-face

communication is the key to essential strategies for the learning and teaching process.

In respect of individual learning platforms and unsupervised (unguided) learning processes, the Mongolian students mentioned both YouTube and Facebook whereas the Korean students preferred only YouTube. The reason these platforms are so affordable or free is that they offer a wealth of content in all areas of learning. Although unguided learning gives the chance the students to implement their successful life-long learning, self-instruction, and self-monitoring, the students rarely tend to use it due to their lack of knowledge of how to use them.

The next finding of this study was the language learning styles and teaching methods of English. The survey revealed that most students of each group have struggled with speaking. Therefore, the students avoid speaking or communicating in English due to such reasons; as confusion and errors; accents and pronunciation; misspelling and misunderstanding; and so on. In addition, reading, writing, and vocabulary are the hardest for the Korean students whereas listening, and reading skills are the most difficult for the Mongolian group. Thus, this paper suggests that there is a need for some fruitful methods and techniques to teach the English language, regarding not only metacognitive, affective, and social strategies but also the students' learning styles, and skills.

Finally, as to the efficiency or outcomes of learning English, students of each group showed bit of different results. Depending on their cultural and social awareness, the Korean subsample emphasized English as the chance of getting a job whereas the Mongolian group mentioned it as the chance to learn about other cultures and expand their world views. Thus, this paper concludes that the differences between the group performances, as mentioned in this research, maybe partly linked to the students' learning style preferences, strategies, and linguistic backgrounds, as well as may be connected to the education system, cultural awareness and social situation of the two countries.

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

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