

Perceived Benefits of Using Telecollaboration for Pre-Service English Teachers

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The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived benefits of telecollaboration for Korean pre-service teachers of English. This study connected Korean pre-service teachers to American pre-service teachers. In a one-to-one relationship, each pair exchanged their weekly writings about the assigned topics over six weeks and shared their ideas. To explore the perceived benefits that the Korean pre-service teachers of English perceived and provide a rich description, this study focused on the five Korean pre-service teachers' thoughts reflected in their reflective papers, their writings in the Google Sites, and the final reflection paper. Data were analyzed based on a qualitative approach using the content analysis. The results showed that the Korean pre-service teachers perceived that the online interactions with the target language speakers promoted their intercultural and linguistic competences as well as some affective domains such as confidence and motivation levels. Building upon the findings, this study provides significant pedagogical implications for instructional practices for the educators and researchers.

Key words: telecollaboration, pre-service teacher training, intercultural competence

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1. INTRODUCTION

Telecollaboration has been widely used in foreign language education. Considering limited opportunities to practice a foreign language in a daily life, telecollaboration provides a convenient and efficient venue for foreign language learners. Particularly, foreign language education in this global era highly emphasizes a cultural competence as seen in a position statement by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2014):

The ability to communicate with respect and cultural understanding in more than one language is an essential element of global competence. This competence is developed and demonstrated by investigating the world, recognizing and weighing perspectives, acquiring and applying disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, communicating ideas, and taking action (p. 1).

Aligning with the core argument in the position statement, the revised 2015 English national curriculum in Korea also highlights the importance of culture in English education. As Byram (1997) claims, culture is best learned when language learners interact with people from different countries. In a telecollaborative context, language learners will be engaging in an authentic communicative interaction where one culture naturally interfaces with other culture(s). Thus, telecollaboration enables language learners to be exposed to not only linguistic forms of the target language but also cultural components which are entailed in language learning (Fuchs, 2016; Vinagre, 2017). Indeed, there have been some telecollaborative research which showed second or foreign language learners' linguistic development and/or their cultural development (Fuchs, 2016; Lee, 2009; Yang, 2018). For example, Fuchs (2016) showed that pre-service teachers in the U.S. and in Turkey exchanged their ideas via online networks and engaged in conversation, which resulted in gaining some intercultural insights into the other culture by discussing cultural topics with partners.

However, there has been a small number of telecollaborative research focusing on Korean participants. Ku's (2014) study, for example, includes Korean middle school students which showed that the participants felt more motivated through interacting with online intercultural partners. Yet, it is rare to focus on Korean pre-service teachers, and explore pre-service teachers' engagement in telecollaborative contexts—how they perceive and what kind of benefits or challenges that they gain through telecollaboration. Moreover, there has not been many studies that took a qualitative framework to extensively discuss participants' perceptions of telecollaborative study: benefits that they feel they gain and the

factors affecting those benefits.

Considering that pre-service teachers are those who could provide telecollaborative contexts to their students in future classrooms, it is important to explore how pre-service teachers perceive telecollaborative learning contexts and how they perform in these contexts. Thus, the current study aimed to deeply explore perceived benefits of telecollaboration for Korean pre-service teachers of English, adopting a qualitative approach. The research question guided the current study: What are the perceived benefits of telecollaboration for Korean pre-service teachers of English?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Telecollaboration

Telecollaboration, often called as online intercultural exchange, has been used in foreign language education for language learners' cultural experiences. Many studies have up to now found that telecollaboration has promoted language learners' intercultural competence and linguistic competence (Hauck, 2019; Lee, 2009; Liaw, 2006; Menard-Warwick, 2009; Waldman, Harel, & Schwab, 2019).

In regards to intercultural competence, Byram (1997) starts to explain the definition of an intercultural learner first. According to him, an intercultural learner is defined as someone who has "the ability to see and manage the relationships between themselves and their own cultural beliefs, behaviors and meanings, as expressed in a foreign language, and those of their interlocutors expressed in the same language" (p. 12). As he noted, intercultural learning includes learning about not only other cultures but also their own culture. He further insists that intercultural speakers are well-suited in increasingly multicultural societies. Byram (1997) calls the ability that an intercultural learner holds to sustain relationships with people from other cultures as intercultural communicative competence. According to him, intercultural competence requires curiosity and openness to other cultures, and knowledge of how their own and other cultures function. As Byram emphasizes, intercultural competence requires considerations of other cultures without stereotypical ideas of other cultures.

An earlier telecollaborative study by Sauro (2016) showed successful results on developing intercultural competence. In her study, Swedish pre-service teachers participated in a telecollaborative project with other peers from five different countries. Through having opportunities to interact with different peers, the Swedish pre-service teachers were able to gain intercultural competence. Yet, this result was not guaranteed for all the participants and the level of competence that the participants gained varied. Thus,

the author stresses the importance of guidance and advice by instructors or researchers. Liaw (2006) demonstrated how Taiwanese EFL students developed intercultural competence through interacting with American students. They read the same text and discussed the cultural issues in the online forum. By analyzing the participants' writings from the forum and interview data, she showed that the participants developed factual knowledge and corrected misunderstanding of their own and the target culture.

Another area that the telecollaborative studies focus on is developing linguistic competence. As many studies reported, it is expected that telecollaborative projects are helpful for improving language skills (Belz, 2003; Kabata & Edasawa, 2011; Lee, 2004). For example, Shelley (1996) conducted research with French and American middle school students, using email and teleconferencing tools. As the second year's task, the students produced a bilingual play including various sociolinguistic and cultural elements. Shelley found that the participants improved their target language usage and increased their interest over the course of the project. Lee (2004) partially supports this idea, insisting that students can improve their foreign language skills only in the context of an exchange with native speaking partners where language learners are fully exposed to native speakers' greater range of functional language usage. Kabata and Edasawa (2011), who studied Japanese and English language learners, further suggested that it is useful to have an explicit explanation about feedback, since students often did not understand what error they had made. This assertion is supported by Lee (2006), who suggests that form-focused instruction may motivate learners to pay attention to linguistic forms, which could help them repair their interlanguage and promote language accuracy. Similarly, Ware and O'Dowd (2008) conducted a telecollaborative study which focused on corrective feedback, connecting Spanish learners and English learners. One group of the participants were asked to provide corrective feedback on their partner's writings and the other group of the participants were not specifically asked to provide corrective feedback to their partners. The research found that the participants preferred to receive corrective feedback on their writing in both groups.

In regards to the development of linguistic competence that the telecollaborative study can provide, one reason for possible development of linguistic competence may be the authentic communicative function that the telecollaborative context can provide. For example, Lee (2009) connected Spanish college students in Spain to American college students in the U.S. Using blogs and podcasts, the participants in both countries collaborated to produce a blog post and podcast. The findings showed that the participants felt that they improved their cultural and linguistic knowledge. Particularly, the authentic feature of writing task where a real audience existed and read their writing seemed to make the participants become more motivated to write and help them have ownership of their writing, which encouraged them to pay more attention to their writings. Yang and Yi

(2017) also showed the positive impacts on the participants' writing competence in their Korean and American telecollaborative study. In this study, a partnership where both parties were learners of their partner's first language (Korean participants were learners of English and American participants were learners of Korean) allowed them to establish a mutual relationship. This partnership led the participants to form a more confident identity and a more equitable power relationship, which ultimately helped the development of participants' linguistic competence.

In addition to cultural and linguistic developments, some studies have found that telecollaborative studies have a positive impact on learners' technological skills. Bueno-Alastuey, Villarreal, and Esteban (2018), for example, conducted a telecollaborative study between two groups of pre-service teachers in two institutions in Spain. The study found that online intercultural discussions helped the pre-service teachers improve technological skills as well as pedagogical and content knowledge, which are necessary for their future career. Dooly and Sadler (2013) found similar results with pre-service teachers in Spain and in the U.S. The pre-service teachers in this study practiced scaffolding by sharing their teaching sequences and creating podcasts with their international partners. During these activities, pre-service teachers shifted their identities between expert and novice and ultimately were able to increase their sense of confidence in using technology and teaching in general.

2.2. Telecollaboration in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Contexts

Considering that most telecollaborative studies include English to communicate with one another as a lingua franca, many studies have included in European participants who used English as a foreign language (Lee, 2009; Müller-Hartmann, 2006; O'Dowd, 2003). Recently, there have been a growing number of studies that include Asian contexts (Akiyama & Saito, 2016; Liaw, 2006; Meguro & Bryant, 2010). For example, Meguro and Bryant's (2010) project connected Japanese learners in the U.S. to English learners in Japan. The study attempted to find a way for language learners to practice their foreign language in a real communication context. Interestingly, the study connected a school classroom to an out-of-school context where Japanese language learners at Dickinson College found language exchange partners through social networking sites. The study suggested a more approachable format of telecollaboration, as opposed to a classroom-to-classroom exchange. Although, a classroom-to-classroom format may offer a well-organized format of exchange, it is not easy to set up the project because it is difficult to find an exchange partner school and financial support for the project. The study reported that the project benefitted learners' cultural knowledge and linguistic knowledge. Focusing on Chinese students, Yang, Kinshuk, Yu, Chen, and Huang (2014) showed how

individual's culture can affect interaction between partners in telecollaboration. They conducted a telecollaborative study of Chinese and American college students. They found that the participants' interaction patterns and their approach to their partners were influenced by their own culture. The research analyzed the participants' interactions through their queries, answers, or comments and classified their discourse patterns by culture. The research showed how one's own culture is embodied in the participants' learning methods and their attitudes toward the others.

Among those studies which include Asian countries, there are a few studies that include Korean speakers who are learning English. For example, Jin (2015) connected Korean college students to American college students in her telecollaborative study. The study examined the effectiveness of using Facebook on the development of Korean EFL learners' intercultural competence. The study found that Korean EFL learners exhibited an intercultural competence through communicating with their partners in the Facebook. Ku's (2014) study, differently, included K-12 students, focusing on EFL learners' motivation and their intercultural competence. The study connected second graders of Korean middle school students to Australian seventh graders. The study found that the Korean participants improved the level of motivation, while they did not improve their intercultural competence.

As such, telecollaboration has showed a meaningful learning context for EFL learners who may not practice the English language on a daily basis. However, there has been a handful of telecollaboration research focusing on a Korean context. In order to enhance our understanding of the benefits of telecollaboration in a Korean context, Korean pre-service teachers of English and American pre-service teachers were invited to the current study and the perceptions of Korean pre-service teachers of English were explored.

3. METHOD

3.1. Context and Participants

A passion for providing an authentic language and cultural learning environment for pre-service teachers led the researcher to embark on an adventure to explore how pre-service teachers perceive telecollaboration and what kinds of benefits that they feel they gain. This study took a qualitative approach in order to deeply engage with the participants' thoughts and perception. Data of this paper are based on a larger study that included 20 undergraduate- and graduate-level Korean speakers whose major is English education in two Korean universities and 20 undergraduate-level native English speakers in a private American university in the U.S. Both of them are pre-service teachers—Korean

participants are pre-service teachers of English, while the American participants are pre-service teachers of various majors with ESL endorsement¹. The process of recruiting the participants are discussed in detail in the next section.

The researcher paired each member of Korean pre-service teachers with one American pre-service teacher based on their interests and hobbies as well as Korean participants' English proficiency collected by the instructors in the Korean universities. The current study presented in this paper aims to deeply explore perceived benefits of telecollaboration for Korean pre-service teachers of English. In order to include a rich discussion about the experiences that the pre-service English teachers of English had, the participants from one of the two Korean universities were focused as focal participants in the current research. Among the Korean participants, five pre-service teachers were selected as focal participants since they engaged in the online interaction and completed the online interaction without skipping some weekly assignments. These participants also generated most relevant data in relation to the research question of the study, perceived benefits of telecollaboration and factors affecting those. Their English levels were similar which was around intermediate levels so that the participants can read and write in English to some degree although they made some grammatical mistakes.

3.2. Data Collection Procedure

As the researcher of the current study and instructor of American pre-service teachers, the author contacted two instructors in Korea based on a personal relationship and asked them about whether they were interested in participating in this research. Once the two partner schools in Korea confirmed, the researcher communicated with the two Korean instructors via emails and videoconferencing tools. Once the core task and the structure of the study were determined, the two Korean instructors and the researcher recruited the participants in our own classes who were willing to participate in the study as part of the course assignment. The two Korean instructors taught English education courses, introductions to English education curriculum, and English conversation respectively, while the researcher taught the American pre-service teachers in a TESOL methodology course which focused on second language theories and methodology. All the students in the TESOL methodology course participated in the current research as part of the course assignment. The study was conducted over a six-week period. Before interactions started, the Google Sites for each pair was created by the researcher. The two Korean instructors and the researcher were able to access to each pair's Google Sites.

¹ ESL endorsement is a certificate which is required for serving English language learners in the U.S.

TABLE 1
Tasks and Weekly Topics

Week	Topic	Task Description
1st	E-mail exchange	Pair work
2nd	Second language learning experience	Share your experience in learning a foreign language such as: 1. Purpose, advantages, difficulties of learning a foreign language 2. Anything you would like to share regarding your foreign language experience
3rd	Most memorable person	Please describe the most memorable person to you in your life. 1. What does she/he do for a living and how did you come to know her/him? 3. Why he/she is the most memorable person to you? 4. What did you learn from him/her?
4th	Favorite place to visit	Imagine that your partner is going to visit your favorite place. You would like to show the place. Explain any reasons that you would like to introduce the place to your partner.
5th	Favorite singer/song	Please think about your favorite singers and songs. 1. Why do you like her/him/them? And what kind of songs did they release recently? 2. Have you been to the concert of that singer, if so, how was it? 3. If you have a chance to meet him/her, what would you want to ask/do with her/him? 4. Please include the links of the songs or singers from YouTube videos.
6th	Free topic	Please discuss anything you would like to talk with your partner.

First, each week, a weekly topic with some prompts was posted in the community space in the Google Sites and announced in class (See Table 1). The participants wrote about the weekly topic in the Google Sites. Once both parties finished their writings, they were encouraged to exchange their feedback on their writing focusing on contents and linguistic aspects. Considering that this telecollaborative study focused on online interaction between partners, it is noted that these weekly topics were given as prompts to stimulate two partners' conversation. This study does not focus on discovering and analyzing the participants' precise thoughts on each topic but paid more attention to how each pair responded to their partner's writing and how their conversation led them to construct their perception toward telecollaboration. Each pair's writings in the Google Sites were collected. In order to comprehensively discuss the focal participants' ideas that are presented in a certain discourse, it is needed to provide a context of dialogue between the partners. Thus, both parties' writings are captured and included in this paper to discuss how their interactions affect the construction of the focal participants' perceptions.

Second, after all exchanges were complete, the focal Korean participants submitted their final reflective paper. According to Frank (2003) and Müller-Hartmann (2006), reflection is a key practice in learning as well as developing intercultural knowledge. Since this study is a qualitative study, there was no formal test or assessment but rather used this reflective

paper as a key data to identify the participants' perceptions. The current study aimed not to generalize phenomenon but to provide "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the Korean participants' perception. Particularly, the current study has the five focal participants, which allowed the researcher to reach "a very thorough analysis (a thick or rich description) of the case" through "concentrating on the behavior on one individual or a small number of individuals" (Duff, 2008, p. 43).

Lastly, the email communication between the participants and the researchers were used to analyze the data. Although emails to the researcher were not required, some of the participants frequently sent the email to the researcher when they encountered some challenges or had some questions. These were also important data to the researcher since they showed what kind of struggles that the participants had and how it affected their online engagement.

3.3. Data Analysis

The current study attempts to identify the perceived benefits of telecollaboration for Korean pre-service teachers. The main data sets for this study include the focal Korean participants' online writings exchanged with their American partners, and their reflective paper, as well as email communications with the researcher.

First, all data were transcribed by the researcher. Then, data were organized. In terms of the weekly exchanged writing between partners, data include not only the Korean pre-service teachers' data but also the American partners writing as explained in the previous section. The participants' writings in the Google Sites and the final reflective papers as well as email communication were analyzed using content analysis (Weber, 1990). While reading whole data repeatedly, the researcher tried to find some overarching themes. After reading of the data repeatedly, the researcher wrote some key concepts that emerged (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Using this initial coding scheme set, the researcher found some categories. After the researcher identified themes in each participant, the researcher compared and contrasted the themes across the participants. Finally, the researcher found some interactions among the themes and identified some common themes across the participants, which are discussed in the following section.

Once the final themes were confirmed, the researcher triangulated the data sources to increase the internal validity of the data analysis (Kirk & Miller, 1986). As Patton (2015) suggested, the study adopted the "triangulation" (Patton, 2015) methods to validate the consistency of the findings generated by the different data-collection methods. The researcher compared the different data sources, including reflective paper, online writings, and email communication.

4. RESULTS

The findings are discussed to answer the research question: perceived benefits of telecollaboration for pre-service teachers, which are organized in the following four categories: intercultural learning, English skills, and affective domains such as confidence and motivation levels. The examples and discussion below demonstrate how the interaction helped them develop these cognitive and affective domains.

4.1. Intercultural Learning

One of the most notable themes identified was the focal participants' indication of their intercultural learning. This includes their learning of general knowledge of culture such as the 1) factual knowledge of their partner's culture (e.g., "I've learned about my partner, Mia and the culture of my partner which she lived with") and 2) renegotiation of their previous idea of different culture (e.g., "I've learned that there can be some people living in different cultures with similar interests"). This reconstruction of the pre-service teachers' ideas about different cultures seem to allow them to revisit their meta-awareness of their attitudes toward the different culture as Nani stated as below:

Excerpt 1

Through talking with foreign peers, I had opportunities to think about my peer's culture. Before, if there was a difference between friends' culture and mine, I simply blocked them. from mine. However, now, I can respect and accept differences² (Nani, KP³, final reflective paper, translated).

They also learned about differences and similarities between their own and the target culture. For example, Hyon paid attention to cultural differences which she learned from her partner. When the participants discussed the second language learning experience as the first topic, Hyon's partner, Kary (AP), wrote as below:

Excerpt 2

I think difficulties that come with learning another language is maintaining the language learned. Since it has been so long since I have taken a Spanish

² All the quotes from the participants are uncorrected for grammatical errors. Only Korean EFL learners' writings written in Korean were translated into English by the researcher, which were indicated as "translated" in a parenthesis.

³ Korean participants are abbreviated to KP, while American participants are abbreviated to AP in this paper.

class I do not remember much and can not use it as often which is disappointing. I think this is a very common issue with most people because many are required to take a language in high school but do not continue to learn the language after high school. If something is not practiced it is hard to maintain the skills for it (Kary, AP, first week's writing, topic: second language learning experience).

Kary explained how much difficult it is for people to retain their second language skills when there are not many opportunities to practice. This explanation by Kary seemed to enlighten Hyon on her perceptions of American and Korean second language educational system. In her reflective paper, Hyon wrote:

Excerpt 3

In Korea, English is learned as a second language. In schools, English is learned just for the tests since English is considered as a core subject [...]. On the contrary, learning a second language is very different in the U.S. Except for schools, people do not normally learn their second language [...]. Discussing this topic with my partner helped me realize that people in these two countries have different perceptions toward second language learning, different age levels to start to learn the second language, as well as different challenges to learn the second language (Hyon, KP, final reflective paper, translated).

As Hyon used the word, different, to describe second language learning in the two countries, she focused on contrasting features in cultures. Hyon used this example for her argument of the two countries' different cultures which she learned from this project, which is clearly stated in the final reflective paper: "The first thing that I learned was a culture which is different from my own culture" (Hyon, KP, final reflective paper, translated). Also, the use of citation of her partner's writing implies that she listened to her partner's saying and seemed to trust the knowledge that she learned from her partner's personal experiences or opinions. This example shows that when the Korean participants learned about American culture, they seemed to consider their partners as cultural informants, fully trusting their partners' saying about American culture. They also played as cultural informant when they shared Korean culture with their partners.

Some students like Sim paid more attention to similar points between the two cultures. When her partner, Emily (AP), wrote about her experience of learning her second language as well as a sign language, Sim found that writing very interesting since she was also interested in learning a sign language:

Excerpt 4

I took 6 years of Spanish in high school. I wish that I retained more of the language because it would be very helpful information to know now. My favorite part of learning Spanish was being able to understand my friends and teammates that spoke the language, and sometimes I would be able to speak back to them. I have been trying to learn sign language because I think that is important for everyone to know, so we are all able to communicate with nonverbal students. I have been working with students that have down syndrome and other disabilities that do not allow them to speak, so I have found it helpful to know a few words in sign language (Emily, AP, first week's writing, topic: second language learning experience).

Upon receiving Emily's writing, Sim wrote as below:

Excerpt 5

I was quite interested in English and I got higher grades than other subjects. I expect it to be due to the characteristics of the language; the same alphabet but different pronunciation depending on where it is placed, the same sound but different spelling. Also, I'm interested in sign language like you. Now, I put off it because of preparing for another exam, but I really want to learn sign language if I can afford it later. Because human conversation is more than just words and writings (Sim, KP, first week's writing, topic: second language learning experience, translated).

Sim connected her second language learning experience to her partner's Spanish language learning in her final reflective paper:

Excerpt 6

As I started to learn English when I was young, Emily started to learn Spanish since she was young. Emily was excited to learn Spanish and explain something to her friends using Spanish as a means. I took the "Introduction to special education" course in which I became interested in sign language. I plan to obtain a certificate of training to become a sign language interpreter after graduating the college. Emily was also interested in sign language and tried to learn it. Considering these, I realized that there can be some people who share similar interests and concerns even if they are from different cultures (Sim, KP, final reflective paper, translated).

By using the conjunction “as,” Sim found some similarities between her and her partner’s second language experiences. Through teaching and learning their cultures, the participants were able to compare the two cultures. The participants had opportunities to learn about their partner’s culture but also revisit their own culture. This comparison ultimately led the participants to rethink their own culture from a different perspective. Considering that the Korean participants and their American partners majored in education, they seemed to be interested in learning about educational systems and teacher training programs in the two countries. Through comparing the two educational systems, the Korean pre-service teachers had opportunities to critically think about their own educational system and further suggested what is needed in the educational system in her country in order to provide a better learning environment for Korean students. When Mia (AP) described one of her favorite classes and the teacher of that class in high school, Jia envied her partner on having a career exploration course from high school:

Excerpt 7

Mia: One of the most memorable people in my life is the teacher I had for my high school Early Childhood Education (ECE) courses. Her name was Mrs. Russler. This class included an actual group of preschoolers who attend during the class hour. This gave my peers and I hands-on experience with teaching and interacting with young children. It was my favorite class (Mia, AP, second week’s writing, topic: most memorable person).

Jia: You mean, you took those courses in high school and had her, right? Actually, I’ve not taken those kinds of courses before I chose my major. In Korea, students usually study a limited number of mandatory subjects such as Korean literature, math, English, and Korean history for the CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test). So I envy you that you took those valuable courses and had a good teacher! (Jia, KP, second week’s writing, topic: most memorable person)

In her final reflective paper, Jia reflected on this talk and suggested ideas about the Korean educational system.

Excerpt 8

The teacher that my partner mentioned was very impressive but on top of that, the learning experience that my partner had in that course was very interesting. In Korea, students do not have time for the curriculum which explores the majors that they can have in college. Korean students focus on

core subjects for the Korean version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT), while my partner experienced ECE courses that are related to a future career and majors that she can have in college. If Korean students can have opportunities to explore their future careers in high school, Korean students will be less confused about their future careers and will devote themselves more to their majors in college. While sharing ideas and experiences about different topics such as culture and education with my partner whose major is elementary education, I naturally became interested in other cultures and had opportunities to reflect on my own culture and the education system (Jia, KP, final reflective paper, translated).

4.2. Language Learning

While sharing writings with the native English-speaking partners, the Korean participants learned about how native English speakers can express their ideas in English, which helped the Korean participants learn about better ways of writing in English as Sim mentioned as below:

Excerpt 9

(This experience) helped me acquire English skills. By looking at the sentences which was composed by the peers who are learning English in another country and by analyzing grammars in those sentences, I have thought that ‘it is a clearer way to write like what my partner wrote’, and ‘if I use particles in this type of sentence, this [referring to the partner’s writing sample] is more understandable for readers’ (Sim, KP, final reflective paper, translated).

Hyon also made similar comments, “I’ve learned about *English expressions*. By reading the American peer’s writing, I’ve learned about real expressions that are used in the U.S” (Hyon, KP, final reflective paper, translated, emphasis added). The Korean speakers seemed to feel that they had a more authentic and rich English learning environment while they were exposed to real English expressions by their American partners.

Not only having been exposed to native English speakers’ expressions, but also having received specific feedback from their partners seemed to help the Korean participants focus on some grammatical errors. Mia (AP) provided specific written error correction as below:

Excerpt 10

Mia: Amazing usage of commas! The only one I found to be out of place

was the one in your sentence about bike riding and drinking beer. In this case, the comma would not be needed since you are not listing the activities or using a compound sentence. Just the word 'or' is sufficient for that particular sentence. One other thing I noticed is that you forgot to put 'and' before you last item in you list. ('and' should have been before restaurants). You should definitely feel proud about your writing! You still have not made any major errors. Keep up the great work! What kind of teas do they sell at the tea houses? Do you like tea and have a favorite? (Mia, AP, second week's feedback on the partner's writing)

Jia: Always thank you for your kind comment! (Jia, KP)

Upon Mia's comment, in the following week's writing, Jia made a good use of comma and 'and' as shown in her writing: Leaf teas (such as green tea, mulberry leaf tea, persimmon leaf tea, and lotus leaf tea). Jia also stated the usefulness of telecollaboration for improving her English writing skills in the final reflective paper.

Excerpt 11

My partner read my English writing and gave feedback on grammatical errors...native English speaker's feedback on writing flow, usage of comma and article helped me be *conscious* of those when I wrote, which was helpful for developing my English skills (Jia, KP, final reflective paper, emphasis added for the word, conscious which is the English word used by Jia, translated).

Mia's feedback during the course of the project seemed to have a great impact on Jia's writings since Jia seemed to make less errors in her writings especially on what Mia pointed out. As Jia mentioned, this form-focused feedback seemed to allow English language learners to notice their linguistic problems precisely.

Notably, the American partners gave more encouraging comments rather than negative or didactic error-focused comments. When the native English-speaking partners provided feedback on some incorrect usage of English expressions, their nonevaluative and more friendly comments seemed to encourage Korean speakers to learn writing skills more comfortably. Mia left below comments on Jia's writing:

Excerpt 12

Your writing is still amazing! I still only see tiny mistakes, In your sentence about Arin's time management, you do not need the 'a' before good. In

your list about what she did, there should be a colon instead of a comma after ‘things’. Other than that, excellent use of commas and compound sentences! I understand what your saying and your ideas flow well. Nice use of the phrase “work hard, play hard”. Wonderful work! (Mia, AP, second week’s feedback on the partner’s writing)

Mia (AP) used positive affective feedback first by using the adjectives such as “amazing, excellent, wonderful.” Then, she pointed out some incorrect usage of Jia’s writing. The native English-speaking peers’ encouraging comments seemed to have a positive influence on Korean speakers’ feeling about working with native English speakers. Jia, in the beginning of the study, was not comfortable writing in English with her native English-speaking partner. She even pointed out her low confidence in English skills, showing her anxiety in English writing in front of native English-speaking peer: “I’m very nervous that you, a native speaker, read my writing” (1st topic, Jia). Upon Jia’s sharing her anxious feeling, her partner, Mia (AP) responded:

Excerpt 13

Please do not be nervous to write to me! Even though I am a native English speaker, I do not know everything and still make mistakes. To me, mistakes show that we are learning and trying which is the most important thing for us to do. Your writing is great! (Mia, AP, second week’s feedback on the partner’s writing).

Mia lowered herself and her English competence while emphasizing the status that she had which was same as Jia by pointing out that she still “ma[de] mistakes” and “d[id] not know everything.” In the final reflective paper, Jia acknowledged her partner’s encouragement. Through her partner’s encouragement, Jia seemed to feel less stressed as time went on. Jia pointed out that she liked working with her partner, because she felt that her partner had “the same status as a student like me who shared the same experience with [me] instead of playing a role of a judge to [my] writing” (Jia, KP, final reflective paper, translated). Jia’s perception toward her partner who had the same status like her implies their close relationship as partners. This encouraging feedback is again discussed in the next section of the affective domain.

4.3. Other Benefits

In addition to intercultural and linguistic benefits, there were benefits in affective domains (Brown, 2014) such as confidence and motivation levels that the participants felt

that they benefited for. For the participants in this study, a sense of confidence seems to be related to a degree of motivation since many participants pointed out that their confidence levels increased as they became more motivated through working with their partners. It seems that the experience of communicating with native English speakers helped the Korean participants feel confident in English skills, which also affected their motivation in learning English. Jia explained as below:

Excerpt 14

(I think) opportunities to converse with partners whose native language is not Korean but English help Korean students feel confident in English and feel proud of themselves. This experience also help Korean students become motivated in continuing learning English for their “*writing in English*” skills (Jia, KP, final reflective paper, emphasis added for the phrase, writing in English, English word used by Jia, translated).

As Jia mentioned, English writing experience with native English speakers not only promoted her intercultural competence and linguistic skills in English but more importantly helped her gain confidence in English writing. This experience of interaction with native English speakers also helped them become interested in and realize the importance of learning English as Hyon and Sim mentioned:

Excerpt 15

Exchanging writings about our experiences helped me become interested in communication with a partner from a different culture and allowed me to realize the importance of learning English. This experience helped me make a resolution to write in English. I think writing journals in English is one way of practicing English writing. (Hyon, KP, final reflective paper, translated).

Excerpt 16

Motivation in learning in English has increased. If it was Korean writing, I may have not put a lot of effort to write it. Since it was English writing written by me, it was not boring but fun during the course of the project. During my summer break, I will write about one topic per week just like this project. I will express my thoughts and feelings, which will be a rough draft in which I can check my grammar knowledge (Sim, KP, final reflective paper, translated).

This firsthand experience of using English in an authentic communication environment increased their motivation level in English learning. The feature of authentic communication environment in telecollaboration is critical for the participants to become motivated in continuing learning English. As Hyon mentioned that:

Excerpt 17

Although I am majoring in English education, I do not have many opportunities to interact with native English speakers. Thus, I enjoyed this project since it provided me with a chance to interact in English writing (Hyon, KP, final reflective paper, translated).

This firsthand experience can benefit for pre-service English teachers in an EFL environment in hope of learning English in a more authentic environment. Also, as discussed in the previous section, the American participants' encouraging feedback seemed positively affect the Korean participants' increased confidence levels and motivation levels. As the participants mentioned, this type of encouragement seemed to motivate the Korean participants to continue and complete the online tasks.

5. DISCUSSION

The current study examined the perceived benefits of telecollaborative experience that the Korean pre-service teachers of English had. The findings reveal that the intercultural competence, English skills, and motivation and confidence levels were the most significant benefits from the telecollaborative experience for the Korean participants. A close partnership established between partners contributed to the construction of the Korean pre-service teachers' perceived benefits of telecollaboration.

While sharing their ideas about the weekly topics, both partners taught and learned about their own and their partner's cultures. This reciprocal style of learning context led them to form a close partnership in which both parties played a role of cultural informant to their partners. Through this process of learning, the Korean participants were able to learn the factual knowledge of American culture. Also, they had opportunities to compare and contrast the two cultures, which ultimately led them to learn the target culture as well as their own culture in a more comprehensive perspective. Further, some participants suggested ideas of changing of their own educational system which shows their effort and wish to develop their own culture, which is an advanced action of critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997) that second language learners can develop in terms of intercultural competence. This result aligns with the findings of the previous studies that

show telecollaborative projects can promote second language learners' intercultural competence (Liaw, 2006; Sauro, 2016).

Another benefit that the Korean pre-service teachers had was the development of English writing skills. The Korean pre-service teachers mentioned that corrective feedback they received helped them pay more attention to their writing. This supports the findings of the previous studies (Kabata & Edasawa, 2011; Ware & O'Dowd, 2008) which proved linguistic development through peer feedback in telecollaboration. Ware and O'Dowd (2008) found that the language learners in their study preferred their partners' corrective feedback in their asynchronous discussion board because they believed that focus on form was important in language learning and the mastery of grammar directly connected to their language competence. The current study further suggested that the positive and encouraging feedback that the participants received was more advantageous and valuable.

In addition to intercultural and linguistic benefits which have been reported from many previous studies, an affective domain was another beneficial part that was captured in the current study. The opportunity to use English as an authentic communication tool helped the pre-service teachers of English understand the purpose of and the importance of learning English. As Lee's (2009) study showed, having their partners as real audiences to their English writing helped the Korean pre-service teachers of English become motivated and pay more attention to their writings. This firsthand experience led them to "feel confident in English" (Excerpt 14) and motivated them to continue learning in English. This result replicates the findings of Ku's (2014) study where the participants felt more motivated through interacting with online intercultural partners. They also constructed a more solid ownership of their writing.

6. CONCLUSION

The current study has aimed to shed light on the benefits of telecollaboration for Korean pre-service teachers. The study found out a close partnership that the participants formed contributed to the construction of the Korean participants' perceived benefits of telecollaboration. The results showed that the Korean pre-service teachers of English benefited for their intercultural competence, English writing skills, and the levels of motivation and confidence. This study contributes to the literature on the telecollaborative study by exploring Koreans pre-service teachers and American pre-service teachers who have not been extensively examined in the telecollaborative study. By adding the Korean telecollaborative study to the literature, Asian contexts in telecollaboration research, particularly the Korean context, can deepen our understanding of EFL situations and pedagogical implications for EFL learners. In addition, the findings suggest that the

telecollaboration is beneficial not only for cultural and linguistic competences but also for affective domains such as confidence and motivation, both of which greatly affect learners' language learning (Brown, 2014). These unique contributions would add meaningful values to the literature to draw a more comprehensive picture of telecollaborative research.

It is important to note that in spite of the possibilities for cultural, linguistic, and affective factors that the current telecollaborative study provided, this study has some limitations. Although the participants' final reflectional papers indicated the participants' feelings and perceptions toward the telecollaborative study, it would have been better to include more data such as interviews with the participants during the course of the study. More interviews with each participant may not only provide researchers with in-depth understanding of language learners' ideas and feelings, but also provide participants with opportunities to reflect on their online learning. It is suggested that future telecollaborative researchers consider these methodological points in order to yield a richer data so that more conclusive results can be found.

Building upon the findings, the current study suggests some significant implications for instructional practices. First, the current study suggests that second language (L2) researchers who study telecollaboration should consider some topics that match with language learners' interests and their second language level. As the current study shows, English language learners can enjoy writing about the topics if those topics are matched with their interests and are not too difficult to write about. Pre-interview or survey can be administered to grasp English language learners' current interests and their L2 writing level. Second, L2 educators should consider including a telecollaborative project in a traditional EFL classroom context. As the current study showed, telecollaborative contexts can be a complimentary to traditional EFL classroom settings where learners can find it difficult to practice English in a more authentic communicative context. Based on the results of the current study provides, educators can gain some ideas and implications from the current study for designing English instructions in EFL contexts.

Applicable levels: Tertiary

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