

Integrating Information Technology into English Language Learning: A Review of Academic Research and Commercial Applications

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I. Introduction

In Korea, English language learning has a very significant role. It has been viewed as one of the major means to improve the country's global competitiveness and international status. At the same time, Korea has had very rapid development in information technology. The popularity of the Internet has sprouted in all sectors, certainly in education. Teachers, trainers and academics have introduced information technology (hereafter IT) to enhance the effectiveness of English language learning.

This paper is an attempt to explore how far the Internet has been exploited in language learning, in particular English language learning, and what the resultant changes are on learning effectiveness. A review on the current development of online English language learning (hereafter OELL¹⁾) is conducted by examining both the related current academic research and practical applications in private sectors. The situation will be explained and evaluated. In the last part, suggestions for further progress will be put forward.

1. English in Korea: Out of a traditional EFL country

The status of English education in Korea has soared recently because of public demand and educational reforms.²⁾ A recent discussion on whether to adopt English as one of the official

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1) OELL in the paper refers to a learning situation where English language learning takes place either using online information technology such as email, web, and other communication tools or via online space like distance learning where learning happens in the online space.)

2) For example, the Chosun Ilbo (<http://www.chosun.com>) ran a year-round campaign, 'English is Power', dealing with various issues of English in the Korean society in 2000.

languages clearly reflected how high the value of English was among the Koreans. A telephone survey (*The Dong-a Ilbo*, 1999) revealed that approximately 56.7% of the 524 participants agreed to adopting English as an official language, even if the country has been a monolingual country for more than 2,000 years. Other surveys also show similar results. A high percentage of respondents supported adopting English as an official language in Korea.³⁾

The same emphasis on English has also been placed at schools. English education was introduced in 1997 as one of the required subjects in the third grade of elementary school. Such measure was to meet public demand and government-led reform for a proficiency-based approach to English education, making the country more competitive in a global and informative environment. It has further aroused public interest and concern on English education. As a result, the starting age of private English education has been pushed down to the first year of elementary school or even further down to the kindergarten level.

Other educational changes have taken place to increase student exposure to English in the classroom as it is their primary learning environment of the foreign language. In 2002 English language teachers in public schools are expected by the Ministry of Education to use English as the medium of instruction. Students can then be more exposed to English and practice it more frequently. New teaching materials have also been designed to assist the non-native English teachers⁴⁾ in introducing authentic English language input. Multimedia materials such as videotapes and CD-ROMs were used as a major teaching resource in elementary and secondary schools as well.

Going beyond the classrooms, the growing importance of English has affected social and family stability in Korea. Some young students in Korea study overseas in English-speaking countries. Though some of them might leave the country for a better education or for avoidance of the highly competitive Korean educational system, English education has been a major reason for studying abroad. Some of them finished their entire secondary education there. Some others spent at least one or two years in these countries. These overseas students have left in their home country a problem in

3) From 1998 to 2001, various Internet surveys were conducted on the issue of adopting English as the official language in Korea (the Chosun Ilbo, 13th December 2000). One conducted by the Chosun Ilbo in 1998 reveals that 54.9% of 37,071 participants disagreed with the idea and 45.1% agreed. However, another survey by Korea Research Center using 503 people in five major cities revealed that 65% agreed with the proposal while only 28% disagreed. In yet another by the Weekly Chosun, 53% out of 3000 participants agreed to adopt English as an official language while 40% disagreed. Of course, these Internet surveys should be carefully interpreted because they were not properly controlled for audience sample.

4) According to a recent survey, fewer than 8% of both elementary and secondary English teachers in Seoul could conduct their classes entirely in English. The percentage decreased as the level rose. For example, 11.7% of English teachers in elementary, 3.9% in junior high, and 2.9% in high schools could use English entirely for language instruction (the Dong-a Ilbo, 14th October 2001). Retrieved at <http://www.donga.com>

family relations. While their mothers took care of them abroad, their fathers stayed and worked in Korea. In a recent study, Shin (2001) reveals that the money an individual spent annually for learning English was as much as the money spent for annual individual health care. In particular, spending for overseas language training seemed to take more than 50% of the total national spending of English education that individuals spend privately.⁵⁾

2. Information technology in Korea

Another social phenomenon in Korea is the growing popularity of the Internet and information technology. In many aspects, Korea is a leading country in terms of using online information and connecting to the broadband Internet. Compared to other advanced countries like the United States, Canada or Japan, Korea is a leading country in its number of Internet users. According to the Korea Network Information Center, there were more than 22 million Internet users in the year 2001.⁶⁾ This figure equated to 51.6% of Korea's population. Almost 99% of 7 to 19 years olds had Internet access. Other figures report the time Koreans spent online. They spent an average of 16 hours and 17 minutes a month online (ACNielsen, 2001), while Hong Kong Internet users were second in the survey ranking with nine hours and 46 minutes, followed by Japan with seven hours 56 minutes.

Naturally, the demand for broadband service has been high in Korea. According to *Financial Times* (cited in NUA, 2001), there were more than 4 million broadband Internet users. South Korea was the country that had the most broadband lines per 100 inhabitants. And 37.3% of Korean households had Internet access with over half now having a high-speed connection. Almost 36% had ADSL(Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line)⁷⁾ while 16.3% had cable access, so there has been a decline in the use of standard modem.

3. Application of IT to English language learning

Educational and social changes have clearly signalled that Koreans want to get out of a conventional EFL environment, where English is rarely used outside of classroom and move into another dimension where English is used not only for international but also for intranational

5) It refers to average individual total spending a year. According to him, a person spends average about 200,000 Korean won, which means each person spends about \$163 a year for learning English. Since the total population is 45 million in South Korea, the total spending would be \$7,335,000,000.

6) KRNIC (Korea Network Information Center) provides various statistics on domestic and international Internet usage. A variety of online statistics is available at <http://stat.nic.or.kr/english/index.html/>

7) ADSL is short for asymmetric digital subscriber line, a new technology that allows more data to be sent over existing copper telephone lines (POTS). ADSL supports data rates of from 1.5 to 9 Mbps when receiving data (known as the downstream rate) and from 16 to 640 Kbps when sending data (known as the upstream rate).

communication as an additional language with which they have to live. On the other hand, the easy and wide access to the Internet has contributed to a wide variety of online activities, such as e-administration, e-commerce, and e-learning. With such a strong technological infrastructure, Koreans would naturally expect their social goal, English language learning, be successfully achieved.

The two factors above have substantially pushed academic research and commercial applications towards integrating more IT into English language learning. This paper briefly review and discusses what has been done in Korea to integrate IT into the language learning by reviewing some of the published articles in major Korean academic journals and examining the commercial applications in private sectors in a form of online distance learning.

II. Methods

In order to trace the development and research of online English language learning in Korea, various major academic journals were reviewed. Four journals from four nationally recognized academic associations were chosen because they represent academic research in the area of English language learning in Korea. The four journals are *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning* (hereafter *MALL*), *English Teaching*, *Foreign Languages Education*, and *Applied Linguistics*. *English Teaching* is an official journal of KATE (Korea Association of Teachers of English), *Applied Linguistics* an official journal of ALAK (Applied Linguistics Association of Korea), *Foreign Languages Education* an official journal of KAFLE (The Korea Association of Foreign Languages Education). *English Teaching*, in particular, is the oldest and most prestigious journal in the field and was also recognized as the most outstanding journal by Korea Research Foundation in the area of language learning in 2002. Furthermore, the other three journals also went through a review process by Korea Research Foundation to evaluate the quality of those journals and the Foundation approved them to be quality-controlled academic journals in the area.

To review academic research, articles that have been published since 1998 were chosen. Even if there had been a few studies, 1998 was the year that the first volume of *MALL* of the Korea Association of Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning was published and lead academic interests and research regarding integrating information technology into language learning. Since the year, many studies have been published in the journal and also the other three journals started to publish technology-related papers.

Among the four journals, 97 technology-related papers since 1998 were selected. Most of them

have been published by the journal of MALL, and the other journals also include some of the papers. One of the goals of this study is to examine a major research trend in Korea with respect to integrating technology into English language learning, major international journals in the field were not included in the review.

For review of commercial online English learning programs, several studies revealed that many online English learning sites are limited in terms of integrating pedagogical principles into the online learning programs (Kim, Y., 2001; An, H., 2001; Lee, A., 2001). According to these examinations, for example, many of listening sites have simple structures, having audio materials, translations of them in Korean, and being followed by explanation on the audio scripts in Korean. The explanation in many cases includes information on grammar structures, pronunciation and vocabulary (Lee, A., 2001).

For this study, more online learning web sites were reviewed and classified, depending upon how information technology is integrated into the language learning. For example, videoconferencing was one choice to bring interaction between learners and native teachers of English. Because of the high percentage of high-band network Internet penetration into household, the technology was used extensively.

Major Internet search sites were used to search for online English learning sites: Yahoo and Naver. According to Naver.com, which is one of the most popular search sites in Korea, 102 sites are listed under the directory of online English language learning. Out of these 102 sites, several patterns were revealed in terms of how the online technology is used to provide English language learning to Korean learners of English. For example, 6 sites adopt the video-conferencing technology that brings learners a one-on-one conversational practice with native English speakers : <http://www.eolkorea.com/>, <http://www.speakingenglish.co.kr/>, <http://www.enativespeaker.com/>, <http://www.elangtutor.com/>, <http://www.webtalk.co.kr/>, <http://www.inetedu.co.kr/>.

Also, some sites use speech recognition technology to teach English conversation skills through online. The sites are as follows: <http://www.talkingenglish.co.kr/>, <http://www.ilove-english.co.kr/>, <http://www.ilove-english.co.kr/>. Other online programs include synchronous or asynchronous online lectures with video and audio. In this case, Korean instructors deliver these online lectures following the format of traditional classroom lecture. In addition, many sites provide online test preparation programs for TOEFL, TOEIC, or TEPS, but these programs were excluded for this review because they are not focused on providing language learning.

One of the major groups of sites is developed for teaching English to children who are

kindergarten- or elementary-level learners. An early introduction of English language teaching for young children is a major trend in Korea and many online learning sites are also interested in opening such programs to meet a public interest in early English language education. Among them, Wasac has been recognized the earliest and most popular English learning site for children. According to Junior Navor, which is a search site for children, shows that the site is chosen the best site in May of 2002. Such site is also reviewed for this study.

Among these 102 sites, three major types of programs emerged to review commercial application of IT to English education: (1) One of them is to have a structure of multimedia CD-ROM; (2) second is to have a one-to-one video conferencing; (3) and finally a third type attempts to mix these online video and multimedia features with conventional teacher-centered lecture and text to deliver language instruction.

III. Results

1. Online English Language Learning (OELL) and Research

Currently in Korea, various people and organisations have become active in applying information technology into the language learning and in conducting research in this area. In this part, these academic papers will be examined to trace the development of OELL in the academic field.

(1) The Internet as an access to authentic information

Most of the early experimental studies focused on the effect of the Internet as a source of authentic materials for English language learning. The easy accessibility of information on the WWW has become a prominent element of the Internet-based activities, especially for the training of receptive language skills. In particular, studies focusing on Web-based reading or listening activities were conducted (Choi, 1999; Kang, 1999; J. Kim, 1999; T. Lee, 2000; Pang, 1999; K. Shin, 1999; J. Lee, 1999; Lee & Yang, 2003).

Most of the research focused on person-to-computer interaction. Students read a text on the Web and completed various reading exercises (H. Chong, 1999; Kang, 1999; H. Kim, 2002). With the same premises of the reading research, studies on listening skills using authentic or pre-programmed audio or video materials were also conducted (J. Lee, 1999; I. Kim, 2000). In these studies, the network environment itself was a focal point of research. Researchers were keen to find out the

nature of the WWW environment, the characteristics of the new learning activity, the learners' perception of and reactions to the Web-based activities. Some others were interested in the learning outcome of the new Web-based reading and listening environment. They attempted to measure the effectiveness of the online activities on students' resultant language performance (H. Chong, 1999; Kang, 1999; Yoon, 1999).

Comparative studies on the effect of the Web-based or paper-based reading environments on student behaviours also have high research value. They have, however, never been implemented.

Some people argue that it will introduce a new paradigm in language education because of the ease of delivery of multimedia contents. Others also argue that the global network overcomes the geographical barriers so that it will provide them with opportunities to share information and communicate with others irrespective of the limitation of time and space. However, it is still an open question in a Korean context, which is a typical EFL environment, whether people use the technology for English language learning as predicted as above, as a space to communicate with others beyond geographical boundary.

(2) The Internet as a tool for communication and interaction

Since early discussions on the integration of the Internet in language learning in Korea (B. Lee, 1996; 1997), the Internet has been mostly regarded as a space where language learners could access not only a huge base of authentic information, but also engage in interactive and collaborative communication (Sung, 1998; D. Kim, 2000). Both features have been made concrete by adopting various Internet tools in research (Cho, 1998; D. Chong, 2000; Ihm, 2000; D. Kim, 2000).

Even if there exist some theoretical and empirical discussions on the use of the Internet in language learning, they are limited in terms of issues and results, especially in writing. Recently, a limited number of studies have been conducted to examine the role of the Internet as a communicative and interactive space for written and spoken communication. Out of a total of 97 papers reviewed in this study, seventeen studies were about interactive activities using e-mail, text-chat, or other synchronous oral communication tools (See Table 1). Only one study examined the effect of real-time online chatting on elementary school students and observed how they reacted during the activity. Even in this case, the focus was still on students' linguistic outputs and their attitude toward online chatting. Two studies, on the other hand, compared online synchronous spoken chat with face-to-face off-line oral communication in the classroom. Others also used the online space for mostly writing activities, but the subjects in the studies are mostly bounded within

the classrooms. In other words, rather than going beyond the classroom boundary, the interaction using various online technologies are limited in using learners who are placed in the same location.

An emerging trend in these studies is that they start to place a value on interactive learning activities using more online communication tools. The studies intend to see how the new instructional approaches help learners engage in more meaningful and communicative activities. However, the research foci are narrow in many aspects. Some of the research themes were on the grammatical accuracy or error correction (Son & O'Neil, 1999; Lee & Yoon, 2000), some were on structural analysis (S. Lee, 2002; Min & Choi, 2002), and others are on a comparison between online and offline activities (Cho, 2001; Choi & Kang, 2002; S. Hong, 2003; S. Kim, 2002; 2003; Lee & Pyou, 2003).

In order to explore the potential of the Internet in uplifting learners' language proficiency by communication and interaction, more in-depth and varied research questions and hypotheses need to be formulated. A series of tasks to generate and measure learner output could be designed. A more extended long-term study could be run to see how students change their behaviours and interlanguage while they move along to complete a semester. Research of this nature is possible by using the synchronous collaborative tools such as MOOs (Chapelle, 2000). They can draw interlanguage samples more easily. Features such as 'save' in these programs help researchers to retrieve interlanguage samples with just a simple mouse click.

Another aspect missing in the 97 examined studies is analysing how learners are engaged in cross-cultural activities to survive not only linguistically, but also culturally. Rschöff (2000) pointed out that it is necessary to have such a skill as intercultural competence. Along with co-operation and communication skills, it is one of the key qualifications for the knowledge-based society. Since the Korean society is monolingual, the ethnic and cultural backgrounds are not as diverse as other countries. It seems necessary to expand such cross-ethnic, -cultural, and -linguistic activities in Korea which is a community growing in globalisation. Warschauer has discussed the value of such a trend in OELL. According to him (1995; 1996; 1997; 1999a; 1999b), the information technology has brought a paradigm shift in using technology for language learning. It helps language learners interact with other language learners or native speakers of the language so that they can have more collaborative interaction. This feature helps learners acquire the target language and bring more communicative and cultural output. The trend, however, is not yet emerging in this review of research papers.

Table 1: Online interactive and communicative activities.

Authors	Research Focus	Year
Shin, H. & Kwon, C.	College students' interactive and collaborative writing on mailing list and Usenet newsgroups	1998
Son, J. & O'Neil, S.	Collaborative e-mail exchange: A pilot study of peer editing	1999
Lee, C. & Yoon, M.	College students' e-mail writing and error analysis focusing on grammatical accuracy	2000
Kim, D.	College students' e-mail writing and interaction with corresponding tutors in the States	2000
Ihm, H.	Web-based collaborative writing focusing on learners' interaction to complete their tasks.	2000
Huh, J.	Using Internet key-pal activities with Korean high school students and Canadian counterparts	2000
Lee, D. & Lee, B.	Elementary school students' real-time online chatting	2000
Cho, D.	Effects of web-based English composition class	2001
Cho, I.	Problems of web-based English composition	2001
Lee, S.	Effects of task type on negotiation of meaning in synchronous text chatting	2002
Min, D., & Choi, E.	An analysis of text complexity and discourse functions	2002
Jung, Y.	Effects of the Internet on students' English composition	2002
Kim, S.	A comparison of CMC vs. Face-to-Face communication	2002
Kim, S.	A comparison of CMC vs. Face-to-Face oral communication	2003
Hong, S.	A comparison of CMC vs. Non-CMC environment	2003
Jang, J.	Effects of Email and chatting on language learning	2003
Jang, J.	Intrinsic motivation, anxiety, and other effects of CMC environment	2003

Finally, information technology has a different meaning in language learning in the information society (Warschauer, 2000; 2002). Information technology can be discussed in the context of CALL, in which the main goal of using computer technology in language learning is to use the technology as a tool rather than a goal. Based upon this orientation, information technology can only be a part of the whole spectrum of technology in language learning. In other words, information technology can be integrated into language learning because it is a part of computer technology, which might be useful for language learning. However, the new emerging meaning of information technology requires teachers and learners to use the technology because the technology as it is important to live in this century. For example, electronic literacy is a new concept that people need not only conventional literacy skills based on paper-bound texts, but also a new form of literacy which is mostly done on computer and a huge networked computer network. Thus the traditional perspective, a simple comparison between online and offline activities in language learning focusing on which environment is more effective, is not meaningful any more. The review, however, reveals that still much research has been oriented toward displaying the effect of instructional design using information technology.

2. OELL and practical applications in private sectors

Practical applications refer to online commercial programs that are designed for English language learning. They are tutorial programs to supplement formal English education in school and they are online. Korea has a serious educational problem. In fact, many elementary and secondary school students take a kind of private tutoring to improve their English skills. Of course, most of them take offline programs in a private institute. But online private tutoring programs are also booming because they are easily accessible through high-speed Internet connection. Even if many online venture companies have opened their online businesses, only online education programs are known to make some profits along with other auction or community sites. More and more offline education companies are opening their online programs as well.

The combined effect of technological development and interest in English learning has caused an enormous boom in the number of OELL programs in Korea. Although the exact figure of these online sites was unavailable, the number seemed to go beyond 100 when this review was conducted. The Yahoo site in Korea listed more than 98 online Web sites under the category of 'English Education'. Some of the most representative and popular sites were examined to show the pedagogical principles and instructional technology behind the OELL programs. Currently, private English education is such a big market in Korea that many companies enter the market and

experiment with all kinds of new information technologies in providing online language learning programs. In the following, the major patterns of practical applications are discussed. They seem to overlap the focus of academic research. The Internet is viewed as a source of information rather than as a space of communication and meaningful interaction for language learning.

(1) An asynchronous approach to OELL: The Internet-based tutor model

In the CALL context, the role of computers has been viewed mostly in two ways: one of them is as a tutor and the other is as a tool (Levy, 1997). Being an e-tutor is the most prevalent format in private online applications. The Internet is a space to deliver a tutorial programme so that the instructor does not need to be online. Learners are self-engaged in the learning process by using a pre-designed and pre-packaged learning programme. The programs take up some roles as a tutor replacing a human teacher. For example, giving a presentation about content would be one role, and providing activities and feedback based upon students' actions another. An attraction of most of these commercial Web sites is the use of multimedia resources to deliver instructional materials so that the design and flow of instruction looks like a CD-ROM based language-learning programme. Most of these programs target at children who are younger than the 3rd graders in the elementary school, and use a lot of animation and graphics to draw their attention.

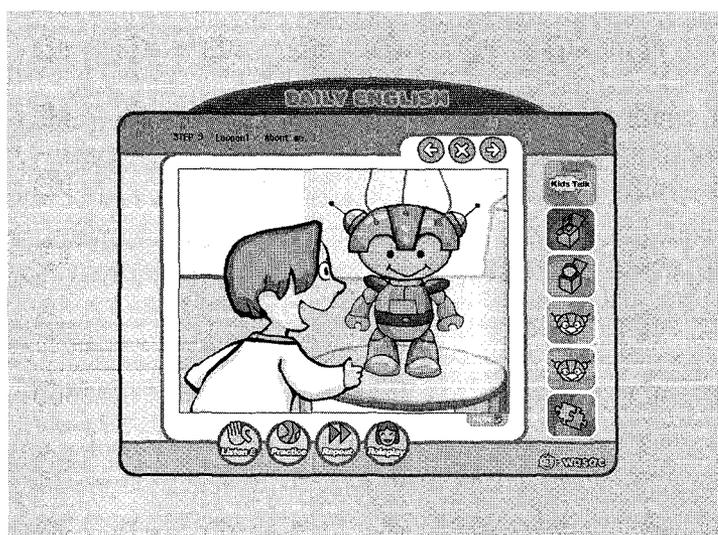


Figure 1: A screenshot of a daily online English program for children at Wasac.

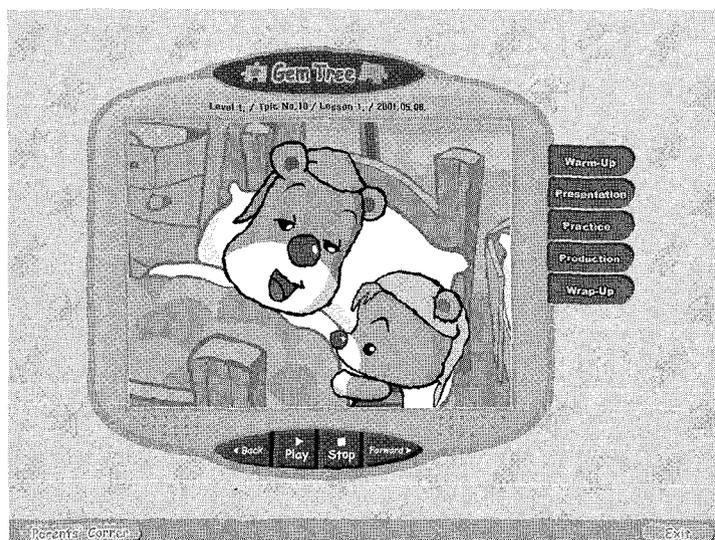


Figure 2: A screenshot of an online English program for children at Korea Education Media.

Since most of the home PC users are able to access the broadband Internet, delivering multimedia materials online does not create any network delay or congestion. Figures 1 and 2 are samples that have such features. They are actual screen shots of two online commercial Web sites. They use *flash* for multimedia programming and they provide several buttons for moving around the lessons.

Though limited, the programme allows some learner-to-computer interaction. Students can actively participate in various learning activities such as filling in blanks or answering questions. In some cases, speech recognition technique is added so that learners could engage in interaction with the computer, do a role-play or play a game. These programs sometimes even run online communities where learners can post questions. Interaction is, however, not the main purpose of the tutor model.

Even if these OELL programs provide diverse, multimedia and sometimes well-preprogrammed instructional materials using audio, video, animation, and graphics, their limited use of the Internet is obvious. They are mainly used for easy delivery of information that highlights the structural perspective in language instruction. Students therefore still rely mostly on repeated practice of linguistic structures.

Surely the Internet has opened a new space where people can create and deliver various types of instructional materials with convenience and ease. But the situation in Korea has not been changed much. Both the instructional focus and the technological level of the OELL programs are still restricted to the format of CD-ROM based language learning.

(2) A synchronous approach to OELL: Computer-mediated human instruction model

A new trend in private OELL is the great reliance on native English teachers. Learners and the native speaking teacher are online at the same time. The technological development in videoconferencing and broadband connection make it possible for the teacher to provide language instructions outside the physical classroom. Technology becomes the major tool in instruction delivery.

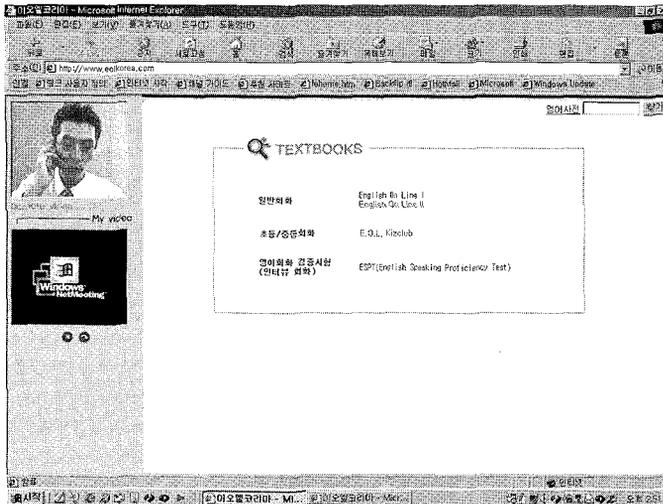


Figure 3: A screenshot of a videoconferencing English learning program at Enativespeaker.

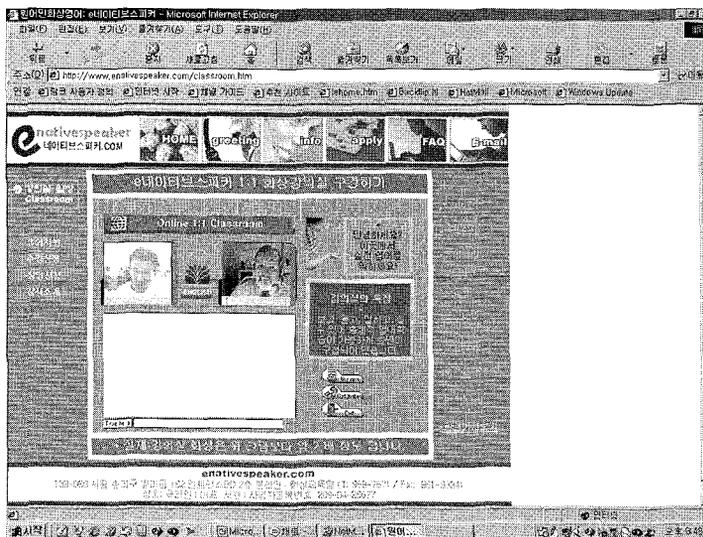


Figure 4: A screenshot of a one-to-one interaction between a learner and a native speaker.

Figures 3 and 4 show two language learning programs in the one-to-one instructional format. The learner can have interaction with the teacher at a specified time. Sometimes the lesson is based on a textbook, but there are usually free conversations. One-to-one interaction is not a common format because of the high costs all the native speakers of English incur.

Some of the programs integrate this type of interaction with the pre-designed instructional materials like those in Figures 1 and 2. The following screenshot (Figure 5) illustrates this design with which the learner does not only have interaction with the teacher, but also practised English based on the pre-designed programme.

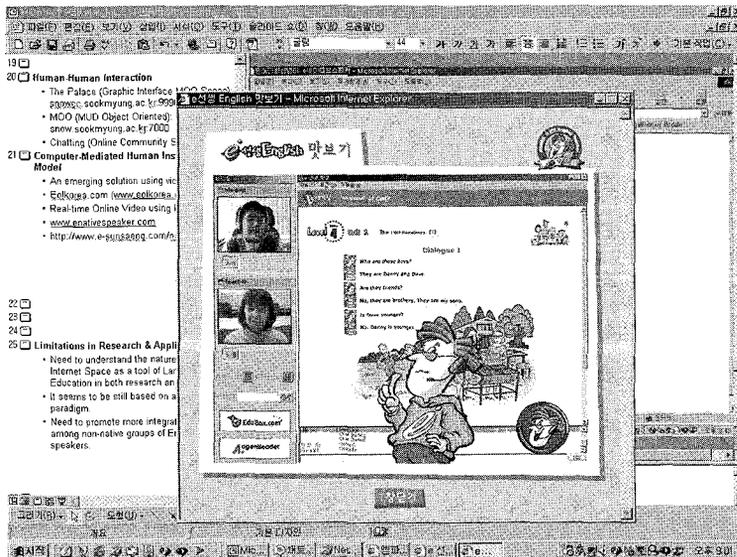


Figure 5: A screenshot of a one-to-one videoconferencing English learning program with a text window.

Some other OELL programs adopt a one-to-many instructional format as this can average out the high cost of a native English teacher and increase the chance of genuine communication among a group of students. (See Figure 6.)



Figure 6: A screenshot of a one-to-many videoconferencing English learning program at Inetedu.

Relying on videoconferencing technology, all these programs provide learners with opportunities to have real-time online interaction with a native speaker of English. This videoconferencing instructional platform also provides a solution for learners living in an EFL context to engage in more authentic interaction with native speakers of their target language. Even limited in time, learners can access native English speakers directly and have a conversation with them. One drawback is that there seems no systematic instructional treatment to enhance learners' language learning.

With the strong technological support, the computer-mediated human instruction model still cannot motivate genuine interaction and communication, not to mention the multimedia computer-network tutor model. There have been some attempts to focus more on interaction and communication such as MOOs (MUD Object Oriented)⁸⁾ and online real-time chatting. They are

8) MOO is a kind of online virtual community where learners can communicate with others at the same time and build their own community as well. Also, they can enjoy the space because it provides learners with virtual community with which they can do many various activities. For example, schmooze provides a virtual university where students can enjoy various virtual buildings, streets, and so on. It has been told that learners can have an immersion effect once they enter the space. It can also provide EFL learners with a more authentic environment where they can communicate with not only their peers within the class, but also others beyond their classroom boundary. One of the major problems in learning English in Korea is that learners do not have a space where they

available but they have not drawn much attention from the learners, private online program providers and researchers. There seems to be many reasons behind the lack of learner interest in such programs. One of them is the insufficient graphics or multimedia in the case of MOO, and the lack of native speakers in the case of online real-time chatting.

For example, a student in my Internet-Assisted Language Learning course⁹⁾ raised the issue of why learners had to use this old fashioned and outdated MOO technology to learn English. He further argued that nobody in Korea would be interested in learning in this text-based environment because they were so accustomed to 3-D graphic online games. In fact, for several years, I attempted to introduce the MOO space in English language learning although it has not been acknowledged as an appropriate and innovative form of English language learning space. In particular, private sectors showed a more negative reaction to the programme because of the surface lack of graphics and multimedia in its interface and application.

Neither has online real-time chatting drawn much attention from the general public as a learning space, even though chatting could provide learners with authentic and meaningful practice in English. Korea has been a monolingual country and classroom instruction has been conducted mostly in Korean so that learners have not had any opportunities to use the language in meaningful contexts. Despite this fact, learners do not seem to visit these sites nor have active and serious engagement in real-time chatting space. There seems to exist several misconceptions that have been lingering in Korean English education. Although the new technology has opened up a new approach and changed the way we use a foreign language, many teachers and learners still cling to the cognitive and structural basis of language learning.

can use the English language meaningfully and instruction has been focused on reading and grammar. Even if the new national curriculum puts emphasis on oral and written communication, it is not easy to create an authentic situation that the learners can use the language meaningfully. However, once the learners are boarding into the MOO, they can immediately enjoy the space and engage themselves into more meaningful communication activities with peers.

- 9) *Internet-Assisted Language Learning* is an online course that deals with theoretical and practical issues of how to integrate the Internet into language learning. Since the course is for teachers or prospective teachers, it focuses on hands-on practices and the practical application of various online programs. It has been delivered entirely online since 1998.

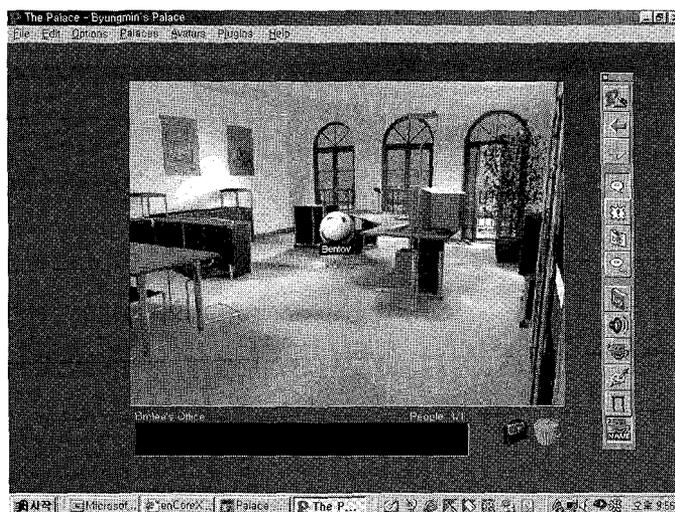


Figure 7: A screenshot of Professor Lee's virtual office at Sookmyung Palace Server.

IV. Discussion

In Korea, the major focus of IT applications to English language learning has been on the ease of information delivery and formal structure-based instruction. The resultant lack of genuine communicative and interactive online activities can be explained in several ways.

First, English language has conventionally been a very important subject in primary and secondary education. It has also played a key role in high school and college entrance examinations. Most learners are accustomed to learning and studying English as a subject only in a classroom setting rather than in a natural environment. Worse still, the learners' classroom performance is guided and monitored in terms of grammatical accuracy because of the pressure of testing and evaluation. Communication is not the prime concern in English language learning. Also, students rarely have opportunities to use the language beyond the classroom as Korea is a typical EFL context. It is a dominantly monolingual society where only Korean is used in both the private and public sectors. English is not a social communication tool. The natural environment, whether it is physical or online, is a strange and insecure place in which students lack strategies to handle real life communication with the language.

Therefore, learners expect to uplift their English standard with a formal educational program in which they are more consciously engaged. In other words, they expect to have explicit instruction focusing on content and the language system rather than communication and interaction with peer

learners or native English speakers. This has resulted in sparse participation in various online communities.

Second, Koreans' conventional objective in English language learning seems to be unrealistically high. They attempt to acquire native-like proficiency in English regardless of the limited time allocated to English learning in the classroom (B. Lee, 1999; 2000). There is a widespread concept that English is the language of the United States or United Kingdom.

A recent debate on grammatical inaccuracy in some English textbooks in Korea shows where the English benchmark lies. When a public broadcasting company reported the issue of grammatical inaccuracy in some public English textbooks, ten native speakers of English from the United States and United Kingdom were consulted. They were asked whether such a textbook expression as "I live right next to his house" is correct. Many of them said that they had never heard of such an expression. Rather they would say, "I live right next door to him." When determining whether this statement in the textbook is a sample of grammatically inaccurate expressions, the judgement of native speakers of English was solely used.

The "native-like" goal in learning English and the emphasis on grammatical accuracy should be held accountable for the limited practice both in the classroom and online. Such dependency on proper English is prevailing and it further discourages the passive Korean learners in participating in genuine interaction and intercultural communication. They are ashamed for being unable to speak native English, not only in pronunciation, but also in syntax and discourse. Learners are not interested in communicating with non-native speakers of English and their peers whose English is not always accurate. Teachers cannot become a role model to the students because they are neither confident in their English nor willing to demonstrate their limited English in front of the class. This cycle continues so that teachers and students are not involved in active communication. They seldom produce any spontaneous speech in the classroom. In almost all cases are prefabricated and accurate native-like model sentences practiced, and students feel comfortable only when they use such expressions.

Another social phenomenon is that Korean learners of English cannot accept the fact that their proficiency is limited and that their interlanguage is natural and sufficient enough to have a meaningful conversation with native speakers of English. A great majority of learners, and even some specialists in the area of English language teaching, regard Korean English inappropriate. I. Lee (2000), a popular English teaching specialist in Korea, argues in the *Chosun Ilbo*, that Korean English (so called *Konglish*) is not English at all and should be avoided as much as possible. He quoted the sentence 'I want to solve stress' to point out that, even if it may sound perfectly fine in a

particular context, it is not correct English. Such a feeling of inability to produce native-like pronunciation and speech results in many learners a sense of frustration, failure and even shame.

Koreans do not accept that the English language is diverse and many localised Englishes are used globally. As a result, in spite of the repeated reference to communicative language teaching and international understanding, guidelines and practices in research and practical applications recognise neither the creative and agentive aspects of language use in this information and communication age, nor the interlanguage development of the learners (Kramsch, A'Ness, & Lam, 2000).

V. Conclusion

Koreans place high value on learning English as a tool to make them more competitive in this global and information age. Emerging from a conventional need of English as a foreign language, they feel it should be an additional language for their survival. In many aspects, Korea is a leading country in information infrastructure and usage of information technology. The review on research and commercial applications on OELL, however, reveals that the online space has only been explored and implemented in a rather narrow and conventional perspective. The academic studies examined in this review are limited in terms of research methodology. In many cases survey questionnaires were used to examine how an instructional mode based upon the online technology has influenced learning outcomes. Even if a few studies were interested in revealing how learners engaged themselves in online activities, their foci needed to be expanded to such questions as socio-contextual behaviours and strategies, not just grammatical command.

Most of the OELL commercial applications examined used the Internet as a delivery tool for instructional programs. Although some instructional designs have integrated the multimedia elements and the traditional framework of presentation and practice, it does not take into consideration the various possibilities of the technology. The online space has not been exploited sufficiently to allow language learners to become immersed in and experience authentic communicative interactions. The computer as a tutor is still a prevailing model in integrating online technology with language learning. The relationship between computer and teacher in the model is exclusive to the point that one does not need the other.

There seems to exist a barrier preventing many Korean teachers and learners from exploring and navigating the huge online space in language learning. They are still limited in, or not accustomed to, going out of their language boundaries. Even many people argue that the Internet can be a real interactive and communicative space where learners can express and strengthen their social and

cultural identities, but technology itself does not guarantee this.

Korea is a conventional EFL environment where learners rarely have opportunities to access authentic information, and to interact actively with others beyond their geographical boundaries. The Internet opens up a new possibility to overcome the limitations. However, technology is one thing and how to use technology is another. It does not automatically change the Koreans' online behaviour. It is true that EFL teachers and learners began to use the network for both information and communication. Hanging onto traditional practices and beliefs on language learning still restricts them, and keeps them from experiencing a different world through technology.

In order to promote a more productive and interactive use of the online space for language learning in Korea, several areas should be further explored: the role of standard English, the status of English native speakers in language learning, the learners' interlanguage, and the value of meaningful and communicative interaction. Teachers and learners also need to experience a more meaningful and interactive language learning online (Hayasaka et al., 1997). Also, further studies focusing on online interaction and language immersion should be conducted to provide specific guidelines and models for teaching and learning in an EFL context. Without such experience and research, it is likely that students will go back to the old paradigm and use the technology in the same way as they practice language offline.

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Note: All Web site addresses in this paper were valid as of 15th March 2002.

<국문초록>

영어교육과 정보기술의 통합 : 연구경향 및 상업 프로그램에 대한 고찰

이병민*

우리나라는 지난 10여년에 걸쳐서 정보통신 분야가 매우 급속하게 발전하였다. 이와 함께 21세기 사회 모습을 정보화 및 세계화로 정의함으로써 영어교육에 대한 높은 관심을 불러일으켰다. 이 두 가지 요인이 서로 상승작용을 일으키면서 유기적으로 결합되어 정보통신 기술을 활용한 많은 영어교육 프로그램들이 개발되었다. 이와 더불어 영어교육 분야에서도 많은 학문적인 관심을 불러일으켰다. 본 논문에서는 이러한 정보통신 기술을 활용한 영어교육 연구 및 활용에 대해서 현재의 흐름을 살펴보는 것이 목적이다. 영어교육 분야의 주요 학술지에 발표된 논문을 중심으로 지금까지 정보통신을 활용하여 어떤 연구들이 진행되었고, 어떠한 방향성을 보여주고 있는지 살펴볼 것이다. 또한 정보통신기술이 상업적으로 영어교육과 접목하여 만들어진 많은 영어학습 사이트를 세 분야에서 중점적으로 살펴보았다. 즉, 어떤 정보통신 기술을 활용하고 있으며, 영어교육 프로그램이 구성되는 설계의 모형은 어떤 모형을 쓰고 있으며, 컴퓨터가 어떤 양식으로 활용되고 있는지 살펴보고자 하였다. 전반적으로 정보통신 기술, 즉 인터넷, 을 활용하여 여러 가지 다양한 연구와 시도가 있었다. 그러나 정보통신 기술이 새로운 교수 모형을 제시하고 기존의 영어교육 환경이나 기술들이 갖는 한계점을 극복할 수 있는 가능성이 있음에도 불구하고, 전반적으로 정보통신 기술 이전의 기술들이 제공해줄 수 있는 교육 모형들을 사용하고 있거나, 극단적으로 몇 몇 특정 기술에만 의존하고 바람직한 교수모형이 결여된 연구나 상업적인 프로그램들이 많이 있음이 밝혀졌다. 영어교육에서 기술의 활용이라는 과제는 단순히 기술의 도입으로 문제가 해결되는 것이 아니라, 결국에는 그러한 새로운 기술을 바라보는 문화적 교육적 이론과 모형들이 기술을 활용한 교육의 형식과 내용을 결정할 수 있다는 점을 바라볼 필요가 있다.

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