

# **Different Types of English to which Korean college students are exposed outside the class**

Choonhwa Lee  
(Kookmin University)

## **Abstract**

The present study examines college students' English contact, which is one of the individual difference factors in foreign language learning. Exposure to a foreign language has been emphasized as one of the crucial conditions in order to achieve proficiency in that language (Dornyei & Skehan, 2003; Freeman, 1999). On the other hand, the lack of language input, or little exposure to English, has been pointed out as one of the obstacles in the EFL context, such as learning English in Korea. One hundred and one (101) Korean university students participated in the survey that investigates what kinds of and how much English they contact outside the class. The survey questionnaire used in the present study was modified from 'The Language Contact Profile' that was developed by Freed et al (2004). The participants were asked to state how much time they spend on 16 activities in speaking, listening, reading and writing in English outside of the class. The results suggest that the majority of the participants do not speak or write in English at all and most of students' writing and reading activities are limited to their course related materials. In the conclusion, the pedagogical implications of the finding are suggested (4 tables, 7 references, and 1 appendix).

## **I. Introduction**

Exposure to a foreign language has been claimed as one of the crucial conditions in order to achieve proficiency in that language (Dornyei & Skehan, 2003; Freeman, 1999). On the other hand, the lack of language input, or little exposure to English, has been pointed out as one of the obstacles in the EFL context, such as learning English in Korea. For example, Kim & Margolis (2000) found that the average Korean student has received little more than 210 total hours of English listening and speaking instruction in their lifetime. In addition, they pointed out that a positive relationship was found between types of English language exposure students have and their motivation to learn English. Similarly, there are studies that presented a far less favorable picture of Asian students' autonomous English learning outside the class. The longitudinal study conducted with Hong Kong City University students by Balla et al. (1991) showed that students had little incentive to undertake English learning outside their course requirements. It was reported that they tended to limit their work to what was specifically taught in the course.

Similarly, Chan et al (2002) and Hyland (2004) reported that even English major students in a Hong Kong university had little inclination to pursue their English learning beyond the classroom.

The importance of English education has intensified over the past decades and teaching English has become a profitable business in Korea. Many secondary schools and universities in Korea now employ native speaker English teachers. A greater variety of language learning resources are available to English learners through commercial or non-commercial channels such as English learning materials, the Internet, and so on.

The researcher believes that the data about students' contact with English outside the class will raise both instructor and student awareness of students' actual current English practices. This data can be an important addition to future research on the relationship between English exposure and variables not discussed in this paper. It is also hoped that the findings can provide guidance for instructors and administrators in their teaching practice.

## **II. The Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of the present study is to examine 1) what kinds of English contact or activities Korean university students have and 2) how often they have English contact outside the class. The types of English contact involves 16 activities related to listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English.

## **III. Methodology**

### **Participants**

One hundred and one Korean university students from three classes participated in the survey for the present study. At the time of the study, students were taking English I, which focuses on the four skills of English. Most university freshmen are supposed to take English I during their first year. Most participants had already taken an English Conversation course during

the previous semester, which is one of the required courses and is taught by native speaker teachers.

### **Questionnaire**

The survey questionnaire used in the present study was modified from ‘The Language Contact Profile’ that was developed by Freed et al (2004). The original version of ‘The Language Contact Profile’ was developed, refined and expanded by Freed in 2001 and 2004 and has been used by multiple researchers in a number of projects (Paige, Choen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2002; Dewey, 2002; Kohro, 2001; Mendelson, in preparation, cited in Freed et al, 2004). The researcher modified the original version in consideration of Korean college students in an EFL context. The questionnaire consists of two parts. Part I includes students’ background information; Part II inquires what kinds of and how much English contact students have had outside the college English class this year. A first draft of the questionnaire was pilot tested with 10 students and revised where necessary.

### **Procedure**

Participants were given an English version of the survey questionnaire to complete during the class period. It took five to 10 minutes for them to complete it. The questionnaire was collected and the data from the questionnaire was coded and inputted for statistical analyses to produce frequencies, percentages and means.

## **IV. Results and Discussion**

### **Demographic information**

One hundred and one students from three classes participated in the survey for the present study. Fifty six were male and 45 were female students. Seventy one (70%) students were majoring in Engineering, 26 (25%) students in Management and four (5%) in other majors. The

majority of the participants (90%) were freshmen, five were juniors, three sophomores and two seniors. Their ages ranged from 17 to 25 and the majority of the students (90%) were between 18 to 19 years old. The majority of participants (92%) responded that they have not traveled to any English-speaking regions for the purpose of studying English. Only four students have been to Canada for two month to two years, three students to the Philippines for one week to six months, and one student to the U.S. for two years for the purpose of studying English.

### **English contact**

To address the question, ‘How much time are students exposed to English outside the class?’ the participants were asked to state the number of days per week and the number of hours per day they speak/listen/read/write in English in a few different situations. The hours-per-week categories were: zero, one to two hours, three to five hours, six to 10 hours, and more than 10 hours.

### **English speaking**

To address the question, ‘How many hours do you speak English outside the class?,’ participants were asked to address the number of days per week and the number of hours per day in three different situations: speaking to instructors, to friends, and to strangers.

Table 1 shows the response frequencies and percentages in parentheses for hours of English speaking per week outside the class.

*Speaking to instructors:* Seventy eight out of 101 students (77%) responded that they do not speak English to their instructors at all outside the class. Fifteen students (15%) speak English one to two hours a week and six (6%) students speak English three to five hours a week. Only two students (2%) responded that they speak English more than 10 hours a week.

*Speaking to friends:* The majority of students (89%) reported that they do not speak English to friends who are native or fluent English speakers at all. Seven students (7%) speak English three to five hours, three (3%) speak English one to two hours, and one student (1%) speaks English six to 10 hours per week outside the class.

**Table 1**  
Response Frequencies of Hours of English Speaking Exposure

Hours per week	to instructors	to friends	to strangers
0	88 (87)	90 (89)	93 (92)
1-2	5 (05)	3 (03)	1 (01)
3-5	6 (06)	7 (07)	5 (05)
6-10	0 (0)	1 (01)	2 (02)
more than 10	2 (02)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Note: N=101

Parentheses= percentage of responses per situational category.

*Speaking to strangers:* The majority of students (92%) responded that they do not speak English to strangers at all. Five students (5%) speak English three to five hours, two (2%) speak English six to 10 hours, and one (1%) speaks English one to two hours per week to strangers.

### **English listening**

To address the question, ‘How many hours do you listen to English outside the class?’ participants were asked to state the number of days per week and the number of hours per day in four different situations: TV/radio, movies/videos, songs, and English learning cassette tapes. Table 2 shows the response frequencies and percentages in parentheses for hours of English listening per week outside the class.

*Listening to TV or radio:* Fifty three students (52%) responded that they do not listen to anything in English at all outside the class. Twenty six (26%) watch or listen to English programs

**Table 2**  
Response Frequencies of Hours of English Listening Exposure

Hours per week	TV or radio	movies or videos	songs	English learning tapes
0	53 (52)	47 (46)	42 (42)	82 (81)
1-2	26 (26)	29 (29)	17 (16)	11 (11)
3-5	13 (13)	15 (15)	13 (13)	5 (05)
6-10	3 (03)	6 (06)	15 (15)	3 (03)
more than 10	6 (06)	4 (04)	14 (14)	0 (0)

Note: N=101

Parentheses= percentage of responses per situational category.

on TV or the radio one to two hours. Thirteen (13%) watch or listen three to five hours, six (6%) watch or listen more than 10 hours, and three (3%) watch or listen six to 10 hours per week.

*Viewing movies or videos:* Forty seven students (46%) responded that they do not watch English language movies or videos at all. Twenty nine (29%) views one to two hours, 15(15%) watch three to five hours, six (6%) view six to 10 hours, and only four (4%) watch more than 10hours per week.

*Listening to songs:* Forty two (42%) students responded that they do not listen to English language songs at all. Seventeen (16%) listen to one to two hours, 15 (15%) listen to six to 10 hours, 14 (14%) listen to more than 10 hours, 13 (13%) listen to three to five hours per week.

*English learning cassette tapes:* The majority of students (81%) responded that they do not use cassette tapes to listen to English materials. Eleven (11%) listen to one to two hours, five (5%) listen to three to five hours, three (3%) listen to six to 10 hours, and no student listens to more than 10 hours per week.

### **English Reading**

To address the question, ‘How many hours do you read English language materials outside the class?,’ participants were asked to state the number of days per week and the number of hours per day of reading English language materials in five different situations:

newspaper/magazine, literature such as novels or poems, course related materials, email/the Internet, and English learning material such as TOEFL or TOEIC textbooks.

Table 3 shows the response frequencies and percentages in parentheses for hours of reading English materials per week outside the class.

**Table 3**  
Response Frequencies of Hours of English Reading Exposure

Hours per week	newspaper or magazine	literature	course materials	email or Internet	English learning material
0	74 (73)	77 (76)	45 (44)	66 (65)	82 (81)
1-2	23 (23)	15 (15)	35 (35)	26 (26)	6 (06)
3-5	2 (02)	3 (03)	14 (14)	4 (04)	7 (07)
6-10	2 (02)	4 (04)	2 (2)	4 (04)	4 (04)
more than 10	0 (00)	2 (02)	5 (5)	1 (01)	2 (02)

Note: N=101

Parentheses= percentage of responses per situational category.

*Newspaper or magazine:* Seventy four students (73%) responded that they do not read any English language newspaper or magazine. Twenty three (23%) read one to two hours, two (2%) read three to five hours, and no student reads more than 10 hours.

*Literature:* Seventy seven students (76%) responded that they do not read any literature written in English at all. Fifteen (15%) students read one to two hours, four (4%) read six to 10 hours, three (3%) read three to five hours, and two (2%) read more than 10 hours.

*Course related materials:* Forty five students (44%) responded that they do not read any course related English materials. Thirty five (35%) students read one to two hours, 14 (14%) read three to five hours, five (5%) read more than 10 hours, and two (2%) read six to 10 hours.

*Email or the Internet:* Sixty six (65) students responded that they do not read any English materials in email or on the Internet. Twenty six (26%) read one to two hours, four (4%) read three to five hours, four (4%) read six to 10 hours, and only one reads more than 10 hours.

*English learning materials:* The majority of students (81%) responded that they do not read any English learning materials such as TOEFL or TOEIC. Seven (7%) read three to five hours, six (6%) read one to two hours, four (4%) read six to 10 hours, and two (2%) read more than 10 hours.

### **English writing**

To address the question, ‘How many hours do you write in English outside the class?’, participants were asked to state the total number of hours of writing English language materials in four different situations: homework assignments, personal notes/letters, email, and essay/report.

Table 4 shows the response frequencies and percentages in parentheses for hours of writing in English per week outside the class.

*Homework assignments:* Sixty one (60%) responded that they do not write in English for their homework. Twenty eight (28%) write one to two hours, 11 (11%) write three to five hours, one (1%) writes six to 10 hours, and no student writes more than 10 hours.

*Personal notes or letters:* The majority of students (82%) responded that they do not write personal notes or letters in English at all. Fourteen (14%) write one to two hours, four (4%) write three to five hours, and no student writes more than six hours.

*Email:* The majority of students (85%) responded that they do not write email in English at all. Twelve (12%) write one to two hours, three (3%) write three to five hours, and one (1%) writes six to 10 hours, and no student writes more than 10 hours.

*Essay or report:* The majority of students (89%) responded that they do not write essays or reports in English at all. Nine (9%) write one to two hours, two (2%) write three to five hours, and no student writes more than six hours.



**Table 4**  
Response Frequencies of Hours of Writing in English

Hours per week	homework	personal notes or letters	email	essay or report
0	61 (60)	83 (82)	85 (84)	90 (89)
1-2	28 (28)	14 (14)	12 (12)	9 (09)
3-5	11 (11)	4 (04)	3 (03)	2 (02)
6-10	1 (01)	0 (0)	1 (01)	0 (0)
more than 10	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Note: N=101

Parentheses= percentage of responses per situational category.

The majority of students did not engage in most English practices that were illustrated in the questionnaire. Speaking and writing practices in English, among four skills, are the activities that the participants practice least outside the class. Also, most of their writing practice in English was limited to doing homework assignments. The fact that almost 90% students do not speak English at all outside the class indicates that it is impossible for the participants to develop their competence in English speaking.

On the other hand, three activities in which approximately 50% of the participants rather frequently engaged were ‘viewing movies/videos’, ‘listening to songs,’ and ‘reading course related materials in English’. Those students spent an average seven to eight hours per week listening to or viewing English programs on TV/radio or movies/videos, and a little more than two hours reading course related materials in English. Listening to songs in English language is the participants’ most favorite practice among all activities.

Students spent more time reading newspaper/magazine or email/the Internet than they do reading English language literature or English learning materials. Approximately 25% of the students read newspaper/magazine or email/the Internet an average of five and one and half hours per week.

## **V. Conclusion**

The present study is an investigation of Korean students' exposure to or use of English in 16 activities in speaking, listening, reading and writing. It was found that Korean students in the present study have very low exposure to or use of English in general and speaking and writing in particular. Also, they tend to limit their reading and writing activities to course related materials.

However, considering the fact that students spent a significant amount of time viewing English programs on TV/radio or movies/videos, listening to English language songs, and reading newspaper/magazine, curriculum designers may incorporate those areas into English courses and instructors can introduce those materials into their class. Also, two productive skills, or English speaking and writing, are areas that students spend the least time so they may need institutional help to develop their competence in those areas.

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## Appendix

### Language Contact Profile

The responses that you give in this questionnaire will be kept confidential. This cover sheet is to allow the researcher to associate your responses with your student number if needed. An identification number will be used in place of your name when referring to your responses in publications. Every effort will be made to keep your responses confidential. The information that you provide will help us to better understand the learning experiences of students of English. Your honest and detailed responses will be greatly appreciated.

Student number: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Part 1: Background Information

1. Gender: Male / Female

2. Age: \_\_\_\_

3. Country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your native language? 1. Korean    2. Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. In what language(s) did you receive the majority of your *precollege* education?

1. Korean    2. Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you ever been to a English-speaking region *for the purpose of studying English*?

Circle one: Yes \_\_\_\_    No \_\_\_\_

6a. If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_    6b. Where? \_\_\_\_\_

6c. For how long? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Other than the experience mentioned in Question 6, have you ever lived in a situation where you were exposed to a language other than your native language by living in a multilingual community; visiting a community for purposes of study abroad or work; exposure through family members, etc.)?

Circle one: Yes \_\_\_\_    No \_\_\_\_

If Yes, please give details below. If more than three, list others on back of this page.

	Experience1	Experience2	Experience3
Country/region			
Language			
Purpose			
From when to when			

8. In the boxes below, rate your language ability in each of the languages that you know. Use the following ratings: 0) Poor, 1) Good, 2) Very good, 3) Native/native like.

How many years (if any) have you *studied* this language in a *formal school* setting?

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Number of years of study
English					
Other					

9. What year are you in school? (circle one): Freshman    Sophomore    Junior    Senior

10. What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2: All of the Questions That Follow Refer to Your Use of English.**

For the following items, please specify: **This year**

- (i) How many *days per week* you typically used English in the situation indicated, and  
 (ii) on average how many *hours per day* you did so.

Circle the appropriate numbers.

1. On average, how much time did you spend speaking *in English* outside of class with native or fluent English speakers during this year?

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

\* This year, outside of class, I tried to speak *English* to:

1a. my instructor

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

1b. friends who are native or fluent English speakers

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

1c. strangers whom I thought could speak English.

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

1d. other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

2. overall, in listening to English *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

2a. listening to English television and radio *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

2b. listening to English movies or videos *outside of class*

Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

- 2c. listening to English songs *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 2d. listening to English learning tapes outside of class *outside of class*.  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- \* How much time did you spend doing each of the following activities outside of class?
3. overall, in reading in English *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 3a. reading English newspapers or magazine *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 3b. reading literature such as novels, poems, etc. in English *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 3c. reading course related materials in English outside of class.  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 3d. reading e-mail or Internet web pages in English *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 3e. reading English learning textbooks such as TOEFL or TOEIC *outside of class*.  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
4. overall, in writing in English *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 4a. writing homework assignments in English *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 4b. writing personal notes or letters in English *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 4c. writing e-mail in English *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5
- 4e. Writing essay or report in English *outside of class*  
 Typically, how many *days per week*? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
 On those days, typically how many *hours per day*? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

Thank you for your cooperation!