

The Effects of Internet-based English Practice on Listening and Reading

Jeong-Weon Song
(Konkuk University)

Song, Jeong-Weon. (2006). The effects of Internet-based English practice on listening and reading. *English Language & Literature Teaching*, 12(2), 195-214.

This study examines the effects of Internet-based English practice on listening and reading. Out of a total of 16 students who took part in pre- and post-tests, 11 who had frequently practiced listening and reading on the Internet showed greater improvement in these skills than the 5 who had practiced less. The findings also suggest that summarization of listening and reading on the Internet was useful as it made students concentrate specifically on the content. This study suggests that English language teachers use a bulletin board to complement the use of Internet sites for listening and reading practice outside of the classroom in an EFL context.

[Internet/cyworld/listening and reading]

I. INTRODUCTION

As the importance of English has increased in step with globalization, Korean students have tried to improve their English in EFL situations. However, as the course hours for English are generally only 3 per week, especially for those not majoring in the subject, additional English practice outside of the classroom seems to be needed to improve their proficiency. As one of the possible solutions, the researcher opened a Cyworld bulletin board on the Internet and used Internet sites for practicing English outside the classroom. It seems important to investigate the usefulness of this method of student-centered practice to improve the receptive English language skills of listening and reading, in an EFL context.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following presents a review of previous studies regarding the use of the Internet in English teaching in terms of the following categories: 1) general overview; 2) focusing on reading and listening; 3) the use of the Internet outside the classroom; 4) the use of the bulletin board.

The increased use of the Internet and of advanced technology has greatly influenced English language teaching and learning. As Morris (1993) pointed out, this may be because the Internet connects information and people without time and space limitation, and also provides authentic materials. Based on these advantages, many studies have examined the use of the Internet in English teaching (Becker, 1992; Kim, 1999; Pang, 1999; Sung, 1998; Yoon, 1999). Several have investigated how to use this medium to teach English to middle or high school students, and have proposed various Internet sites to practice different language skills - thus supporting the idea of the usefulness of the Internet (Bae, 2005; Byeon, 2002; Cheong, 2000; Lee, 2003). However, although these studies list or indeed recommend useful Internet sites, their effectiveness would receive greater support if an actual test could be provided to examine students' resultant improvement in English, rather than simply documenting the sites. As these studies point a way for middle or high school students to use the Internet, further investigation seems to be needed on how best to use the Internet at university level.

The following studies investigated a variety of uses of the Internet in English teaching. In Song's study (2001), for instance, the communication types of 64 online English learning sites were analyzed. The resulting report stated that there was little interaction between students. This suggests that a number of useful programs need to be developed to stimulate communication between students. Lim (2002) researched the actual conditions of Internet use among middle school English teachers, and the findings indicate that most teachers recognized the need for an Internet network in the English teaching classroom. However, as Bae (2005) stated, having such an Internet network is not the total solution as it could be sometimes disconnected. Teachers, therefore, need to prepare and develop various useful teaching materials for the class as well. Kim (2005) advised the use of Internet sites for middle school students to improve cultural understanding.

The most common use of the Internet, as Bruffee (1993) points out, is the providing of a reading area as a limitless supply of authentic reading materials is

available there. The studies below investigated the use of the Internet with a special focus on this reading area. In Park's study (1999), the reading ability of the students who used the Internet program during class and their interest toward reading were higher than for those who did not.

Chong (1999) used the Internet to teach reading to vocational high school students who showed a favorable reaction. However, the students with low language proficiency had difficulty in understanding the linking processes of the reading texts, so they relied heavily on visual cues rather than the text itself to understand its meaning. It was thus recommended that such students should avoid using Internet sites with too many visual materials, menus and links for reading. Kang (1999) examined the influences of various learner factors on reading, including the use of the Internet for the reading class. The findings showed that other more personal factors, such as English reading and computer competence as well as having a PC, had an influence on their English reading and on their ability to surf Internet sites. In line with the findings of Chong's study (1999) regarding learners with low language skill, the use of the Internet needs to be carefully evaluated and organized as they are less able to surf Internet sites or understand the text on the Internet.

A few studies (Kim, 2005; Park, 2001; Park, 2002; Shin, 1999) advocated teaching methods or lesson plans incorporating Internet sites or a university homepage, specifically for the reading class, and this seems to reinforce the idea of the effectiveness of Internet sites for improving reading ability. Although these studies focused on the reading area, as Park (2001) pointed out, teaching reading by using the Internet might also afford the opportunity not only to read but also to expose to other language skills because of multimedia features, like text, graphics, images, audio, and video.

Advanced computer technology has also made available on the Internet many authentic listening resources, such as news, reports, and educational materials, in the form of the RealAudio Player and MP3 files (Shin, 1999). There has been some research investigating the use of the Internet, especially in the listening area (Baik, 2002; Cha, 2000; Eo, 2001; Kim, 2002; Shim, 2000). Cha (2000) examined the factors that made listening to the news difficult. Students listened to it on CD-Rom and reported that not only vocabulary items but also background knowledge was needed for effective comprehension. Kim (2002) examined listening materials on 14 foreign and Korean Internet sites. His findings revealed that foreign sites provide various kinds of task input, whereas Korean ones lay

strong emphasis on news as the main source of the same.

In studies by Baik (2002) and Shim (2000), those students who had a listening class in a multimedia classroom showed an increased interest in listening and a greater improvement in listening comprehension by using the Internet than those who did not. However, Baik (2002) highlighted a couple of problems in using the Internet during the class. On occasion, it could be disconnected, too slow or out of order, and this happens without warning. In order to solve this kind of unexpected problem, teachers have to prepare a well-planned syllabus—something also mentioned by Bae (2005).

Many of the studies reviewed above mostly focused on or suggested the use of the Internet in the classroom. However, the following few studies examined the way English is practiced outside the classroom. Choi and Lee (2003) researched the effects of Internet-based reading, listening and writing assignments on their homepage in English secondary education. The results of their study suggest that there were statistically significant improvements in listening, but not in reading and writing. In Heo's study (2003), the students were required to practice listening to the Voice of America (VOA) news on the Internet as an assignment outside of the classroom. The VOA delivers the news at a slow speed, together with a script and a video clip in the form of a Real player program. Although there was no real test to examine for listening improvement, the findings showed that slow speech listening practice could be useful for practicing top-down listening to understanding the gist of the message, rather than bottom-up, focusing more on grammar and pronunciation.

The Internet has also been used for asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), especially in terms of emails or bulletin boards, which could be a possible solution for practicing English outside the classroom. Few researchers used the bulletin board for the practice of writing (Lee, 2000; Song, 2006). As Lee (2000) and Shin (1999) reported, its use in simultaneous communication and interaction might be more effective than e-mail, thus supporting its effectiveness in English teaching. However its use for practicing receptive language skills is questionable.

As the review of the above studies demonstrates, there have been many researches investigating and suggesting the use of the Internet, but the earlier ones mostly focused on the use of Internet-based practice, especially in the classroom. However, as the class hours for reading and listening practice are generally limited to only a few per week, especially for non-English major

students, the effectiveness of these exercises using the Internet seems to be important in an EFL context.

Because of the dearth of studies examining the effectiveness of using the Internet to improve receptive skills, the present study aims to explore the following research questions:

1. Is the student-centered practice of reading and listening with a summarizing of extracurricular Internet reading and listening materials useful for improving receptive language skills?
2. What are the students' attitudes toward the practice of reading, listening and summarizing such materials on the Cyworld Internet site?

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Subjects

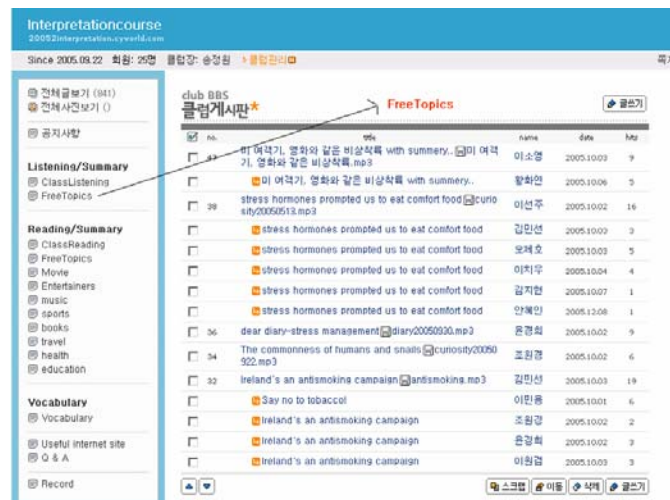
25 students, who were enrolled in the Introduction to Interpretation course at K University in Seoul, participated in the present study. Among them, 3 juniors and 13 seniors were majoring in English Language and Literature, while the rest, in different years, majored in other courses. However, due to circumstances beyond our control, only 16 students took part in the tests. The students had classes in an ordinary classroom without any multimedia facilities. Outside of the classroom, they were required to practice listening and reading with précis-writing on the Internet.

2. Internet-based English Practice

For the present study, the participants were required to surf the Internet sites. Most junior and senior participants of the study knew how to surf the Internet sites and those they used most are shown in the Appendix. Both Korean and foreign Internet sites were used. After surfing the Internet sites, students performed the listening, reading, and summary writing tasks on the sub-boards of the Cyworld bulletin board. As the use of the Cyworld club Internet site is a recent trend in Korea, the researcher purposely used its bulletin board for the student-centered practice of English outside of the classroom. This bulletin board does not require any program installation, and many sub-bulletin boards can

be opened in the Cyworld club. Figure 1 shows a sample of a bulletin board on this site.

FIGURE 1
A Sample of a Cyworld Bulletin Board



Detailed explanations of the activities are as follows.

1) The Sub-board for Listening and Summary

The students were asked to surf the Internet site in order to listen to any English topics they liked. They then downloaded the listening files (usually as MP3 files), and uploaded them onto the 'Listening/Summary' board of the Internet Cyworld club. To make sure that they actually listened to the file and practiced their précis-writing skills in English, they were asked to summarize the content of the listening files that they had uploaded as well as those of their peers, and write a synopsis as a reply on the public forum site of the bulletin board.

2) The Sub-board for Reading and Summary

For the reading and summary exercises, the participants were asked to surf the

Internet site for reading texts based on either specific topics from the researcher or any others they cared to read. After copying the reading texts from the Internet, they were asked to paste them on the 'Reading/Summary' bulletin board. Again, in order to make sure that they had actually read the text and practiced their summary-writing summary skills in English, they were asked to summarize their own reading texts and those of their peers onto the bulletin board.

For the 'listening and summary', and 'reading and summary' tasks, the students were required to practice each activity at least 3 times a week.

3) Listening or Reading Only

As an additional exercise, the students were allowed to either listen to or read the practice samples on the Cyworld bulletin board without writing a summary of the content if they did not want to.

4) Total Number of Practice on the Cyworld Depending on the Group

Among the 16 students who took the pre- and post- tests, the 11 who took part in most of the listening and reading activities of the Cyworld were considered a 'High' group, while the other 5 who were less involved were regarded as a 'Low' group. The rationale behind this classification was that the more they participated in the exercises, the more their listening and reading improved.

Table 1 shows that the 11 students of the 'High' group practiced listening and reading on the Cyworld club a total of 85 times on average ($M=85.45$), while the 5 in the 'Low' group exercised their listening and reading about 30 times ($M=29.80$). As for the specific task, the 'High' group ($M=18.80$) practiced 'Listen & summary' about 4 times more than the 'Low' group ($M=4.60$). A number of other exercises are shown in Table 1. As a result, the 'High' group, in particular, performed more 'Listen & summary', and 'Read & summary' activities than 'Listen only' or 'Read only' exercises, compared to the 'Low' group.

TABLE 1
Number of Listening, Reading, and Summary Practice of the Students

Types of Practice	Group	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
1) Listen & Summary	High	14	23	18.80 (+4)*	2.94
	Low	2	7	4.60	1.82
2) Read & Summary	High	17	28	23.73 (+3)	2.80
	Low	7	8	7.80	0.45
3) Listen only	High	8	50	22.18 (+3)	12.32
	Low	1	14	8.20	5.12
4) Read only	High	8	38	22.55 (+2)	10.15
	Low	5	16	11.50	4.80
Total numbers	High	58	124	85.45 (+3)	18.98
	Low	14	41	29.80	10.80

* (+Number): The number represents how many more times the 'High' group practiced than the 'Low' group.

3. Instruments of the Data Collection

In order to collect the qualitative data, the students took pre- and post- sample listening and reading TOEIC tests, which were considered of equal difficulty, at the beginning and end of the semester. As there was not enough time to give a full test to the participants, 50 questions from section II were selected for the listening test, and 25 from section VII for the reading test. In collecting the qualitative data, a questionnaire was used to investigate the attitudes of the students toward the Cyworld listening and reading tasks.

4. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the mean differences of the students' pre- and post- tests in listening and reading, the Paired Samples t-test was applied using SPSS 10.0 for Window. While 25 students participated in the present study, only the data of 16 were finally analyzed, as these were the ones who took both the pre- and post-listening and reading tests.

As for the questionnaire answers, 20 students responded out of a total of 25, and the researcher counted the subjects' replies and converted them into percentages. The open-ended questions in the questionnaire were scrupulously categorized and summarized.

IV. RESULTS

Below are the results of the pre- and post- listening and reading tests in the 'High' and 'Low' groups, which were classified according to the number of those taking part in the Internet Cyworld club exercises, while the following section also presents the attitudes of students toward the listening and reading tasks on the Cyworld.

1. Listening and Reading Tests

For the 'High' group who were more involved in the Internet-based tasks, the mean scores of the listening tests significantly increased from 36.60 to 39.30, which represents a rise of 2.70 ($p=.046$). For the reading test, the mean of the pre-test was 20.36, and this also significantly improved to 22.09 ($p=.017$). The results reveal that the students' listening and reading levels improved after taking part in the listening and reading exercises on the Cyworld bulletin board of the Internet. These results are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

TABLE 2
Listening Test of High Group

	N	M	SD	Mean Differences		
				M (SD)	t	p
Pre-test	10	36.60	5.56	+2.70 (3.68)	-2.318	.046
Post-test	10	39.30	5.19			

TABLE 3
Reading Test of High Group

	N	M	SD	Mean Differences		
				M (SD)	t	p
Pre-test	11	20.36	2.77	+1.73 (2.00)	-2.858	.017
Post-test	11	22.09	1.30			

On the other hand, the mean scores for the post- listening and reading tests of the 'Low' group who engaged in the Internet-based exercises only a few times, were no higher than those of the pre-tests. In fact, the mean of the post-listening test was 35.60, while that of the post-test was 33.40, a decrease of 2.00 which failed to show any statistical significance ($p=.220$). For the reading, the mean of

the pre-test was 19.40, and that of the post-test was 20.20, with only a very slight increase of .80, which again failed to show any statistical significance ($p=.099$). These results indicate that because this lower group was involved in the listening and reading exercises only a few times on the Cyworld bulletin board, their listening and reading levels did not improve.

TABLE 4
Listening Test of Lower Group

	N	M	SD	Mean Differences		
				M (SD)	t	p
Pre-test	5	35.60	8.08	-2.00 (3.08)	1.451	.220
Post-test	5	33.40	6.02			

TABLE 5
Reading Test of Lower Group

	N	M	SD	Mean Differences		
				M (SD)	t	p
Pre-test	5	19.40	1.82	+0.80 (0.84)	-2.138	.099
Post-test	5	20.20	2.28			

2. Attitudes of the Participants toward the Practice on the Cyworld

The following presents the results of the questionnaire which set out to investigate the students' attitudes toward the listening and reading activities on the Cyworld Internet site (see Tables 6~9). Although the skill of summarizing was not included in the quantitative test, it was placed in the questionnaire to investigate the attitudes of the students toward it. Overall, the participants showed a favorable opinion of the activities on the Cyworld club, and wanted to continue with them as they considered them useful for improving their English.

In detail, for question 1, the listening and reading tasks on the Cyworld received very positive reactions as almost all of the 19 students (95%) approved of them as being either 'very useful' or 'useful' for improving their English; only 1 student (5%) gave negative feedback. Regarding question 2, examining whether their anxiety toward English had decreased following the exercises on the Cyworld, 19 students (95%) answered either very much or a lot. As to whether the participants had actually listened to or read other listening and reading samples on the Cyworld bulletin board (Q3), all 20 (100%) offered a very

positive 'very much' or 'much'. Asked if the experience of listening to or reading other samples on the Cyworld board was useful for improving their English (Q4), 19 (95%) also responded either 'very much' or 'much'.

TABLE 6
The Results of the Questionnaire (n=20)

Summary of Statement	Very much	much	little	Very little	No answer
1) Listening and reading activity to improve English ability	2 (10%)	17 (85%)	1 (5%)	0	
2) Decreased anxiety toward English	1 (5%)	18 (90%)	1 (5%)	0	
3) Experience in listening to/reading other materials on the board	6 (30%)	14 (70%)	0 (0%)	0	
4) The usefulness of the experience to practice other materials on the board	3 (15%)	16 (80%)	1 (5%)	0	
5) Motivated after listening to /reading other materials on the board	5 (25%)	11 (55%)	3 (15%)	0	1 (5%)
6) Continuation of the listening/reading exercises	3 (15%)	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	0	1 (5%)
7) Expectation of improving English ability	6 (30%)	12 (60%)	2 (10%)	0	
8) Topic preference	1. Free topics 11 (55%) 2. Specific topics 1 (5%) 3. Free and specific topics 8 (40%)				
9) Reasons for enrolling on the course	1. To be an interpreter 0 (0%) 2. To improve English 15 (75%) 3. Others 5 (25%)				

When asked about whether the same experience motivated them to listen to or read other materials (Q5), 16 students (80%) answered either 'very much' or 'much', though 3 (15%) admitted they were not encouraged. For question 6, which was concerned with continuing with these exercises on the Cyworld, 15 students (75%) expressed a desire to continue by answering either 'very much' or 'much', but 5 (25%) responded negatively. For the following question asking about their expectations of improving their English by continuing with the tasks on the Cyworld, 18 students (90%) thought that their English could be improved that way, and so answered either 'very much' or 'much', but 2 (10%) were doubtful.

For question 8, regarding the topics for practicing listening and reading, 11 students (55%) preferred to practice listening and reading tasks based on the free topics, that is, to be able to listen and read whatever they wished, while 8 (40%) wanted both a free choice of topics as well as specific ones selected by the teacher.

Only 1 student (5%) opted for the specific topic from the teacher. When asked for the reason they had signed up for the Introduction to Interpretation course (Q9), 15 students (75%) indicated to improve their English, and the other 5 (25%) mentioned that they were attracted by the experience of the course itself.

The next part of the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions to examine the advantages and disadvantages of the listening, reading, and résumé writing tasks on the Cyworld. Some students offered more than one opinion. For the listening practice, 12 mentioned the abundance of listening materials on the Cyworld as the greatest advantage. The next advantage was the downloading of MP3 listening files from the Cyworld bulletin board and listening to them repeatedly (N=4). The biggest disadvantage was that there was little variety among the topics for listening practice (N=4). The next drawback was that it was difficult to find MP3 listening files with a transcript. Other pros and cons are summarized in Table 7.

TABLE 7
Advantages and Disadvantages of Listening Practice

Advantages	R	Disadvantages	R
1) many and varied listening materials	12	1) divide listening on different topics	6
2) downloading MP3 files and repeating them	4	2) difficult to find MP3 listening files with transcripts	4
3) no time limitation for listening	2	3) discouraging to listen to long listening files	1
4) shadowing the listening with reading the transcript	1	4) TOEIC & TOEFL listening practice not included	1
5) to listen to the real speed of a native speaker	1	5) Listening practice for conversation not included	1
6) to reduce anxiety towards news listening	1	6) too much work	1
7) gaining confidence in listening	1		

In terms of reading practice, the greatest advantage was that the students were able to read current news and obtain information in English (N=10). The next benefit was learning vocabulary items, expressions, and writing styles (N=8). The biggest disadvantage was the inconvenience of reading the text format, such as font size or line (N=6). The next drawback was that some

reading texts were too long to read (N=3). Other pros and cons are summarized in Table 8.

TABLE 8
Advantages and Disadvantages of Reading Practice

Advantages	R	Disadvantages	R
1) reading current news & getting a variety of information	10	1) inconvenient reading text format (font size, line)	6
2) learning vocabulary items & expressions & writing styles	8	2) too long reading text	3
3) practice fast reading & getting the point	5	3) too much work	2
4) no need to read other reading materials	2	4) TOEIC & TOEFL reading practice not included	1
5) possible to read any time	1		
6) reading other English Internet sites	1		
7) having a habit of reading	1		

For the summary task, 13 students mentioned practicing writing as the most advantageous, and 7 indicated learning and using vocabulary items and expressions. The greatest disadvantage was no feedback about their summary writing (N=4). Other reasons for and against are summarized in Table 9.

TABLE 9
Advantages and Disadvantages of Summarizing Practice

Advantages	R	Disadvantages	R
1) to practice writing	13	1) need for feedback for the summary	4
2) learning and using vocabulary items, expressions & grammar	7	2) need for other topics only for writing	2
3) improving general English	4		
4) ability to summarize the content of listening and reading	3		
5) learning from other students' summaries	2		
6) acquiring a habit of writing	1		

V. DISCUSSIONS

1. Listening Practice

As mentioned earlier, the listening comprehension of the 'High' group, that is, those who practiced more listening on the Cyworld Internet site, improved more significantly than the 'Low' group, i.e., those who practiced less. This result is consistent with the findings of Choi and Lee (2003), except that, in their study, the students' educational level was different: they were middle school students,

whereas in the present study, they were university students. This improved listening competence is also consistent with the findings of Shim (2000) and Baik (2002), although the listening practice was carried out during the class, and not outside. The decreased anxiety shown toward listening practice was also in accord with the findings of Heo's study (2003).

These results support the idea of the usefulness of the Internet for listening practice both inside and outside the classroom. This may be because, as Choi and Lee (2003) pointed out, the Internet site provides many useful and free listening materials for different levels and on various topics. However, a few students mentioned the difficulty of finding MP3 listening files with transcripts. This suggests that although most were able to surf the Internet for their practice exercises, it would be better if the teacher provided lists of useful sites, or recommended specific ones, such as, the VOA news, used in Heo (2003), which was not mentioned at all by the students of this study. Although there were several students who experienced difficulty in finding the MP3 listening files, they could have practiced with other uploaded MP3 files on the Cyworld bulletin board.

As Warschauer (1997) pointed out, students can be more collaborative and interactive on the bulletin board than through e-mail alone. It also provides them with an opportunity to share information. According to the present study, the following could be a few of its benefits. Firstly, as shown in the results of the questionnaire, when the students surfed and uploaded MP3 listening files on the Cyworld, they were able to listen to many files, and they seemed to be happy to accumulate these listening materials. The subjects of the present study also identified using the Internet for listening tasks as being a great advantage in that it could act as a Cyber space for their listening portfolio. Another motivating factor was that when the students checked the 'Hits' column representing how many people had listened to the accumulated listening files, they realized that their peers also practiced listening on the Cyworld bulletin board.

Secondly, as most listening files on the Cyworld were available in MP3 format, the students downloaded them to their MP3 players and could practice listening at their own convenience. Lastly, they were able to practice different language skills on the bulletin board, such as, listening, reading, and writing summaries, as in the present study. As Park (2001) indicated, multimedia features on the Internet, such as text, audio, video, and so forth, provide an opportunity for students to practice English in an integrated way.

Taking into account that the listening content of most of the files on the Cyworld bulletin board of the present study consisted of current news, a few students suggested that it might be useful to create a sub-board or a menu on the bulletin board management system and allow them to upload other listening files for TOEIC or conversation practice. Based on the above discussion of the study, the results of improved listening suggest that language teachers and learners should use an Internet site for listening practice outside the classroom. The teacher might also need to check regularly on the kinds of difficulties encountered in listening practice when using the Internet, and provide help to the students.

2. Reading Practice

The reading comprehension scores of the 'High' group (those who spent a greater amount of time reading on the Cyworld Internet site) improved considerably more than those of the 'Low' group, who practiced less. These increased reading comprehension results are in keeping with the findings of Park's (1999) study, and with the perceived advance in reading comprehension in Kang (1999), and Chong (1999). The results of their study are fairly consistent with those of Choi and Lee (2003) in which the reading test was not administered separately. Nevertheless, the grades of the group who practiced Internet reading surpassed those who did not, though the improvement was insignificant. The positive outcomes of the present and previous studies suggest that the use of the Internet whether in or out of class could be a useful way of upgrading the reading comprehension ability of the students.

The responses of those taking part in the listening tasks of the study, displayed as much satisfaction with many of the reading materials on the Cyworld as they did with the use of a Cyworld bulletin board and Internet sites because these allowed them to read updated current news and to obtain information regularly – and this was pointed out as being of the greatest advantage. As Choi and Lee (2003) also mentioned, in order to choose the reading materials to paste on the bulletin board, the students had to skim through a lot of reading materials on the Internet sites, and this was useful for developing their reading speed and understanding the gist of the reading passages.

For the reading assignments, the researcher allowed the students to peruse a variety of topics, including their favorites, in the hope that this would improve their reading enjoyment. As for reading topic preference, as some students

avored a free choice while others wanted both free and designated topics, it seemed better to provide both options.

The Cyworld reading materials also permitted the students to read the materials at their convenience. However, some reading texts on the Cyworld were not suitable for reading, and this was pointed out as a drawback to reading practice. This problem was also mentioned by Chong (1999), as some students pasted reading texts on the bulletin board without taking care to edit or change the font sizes and lines of the original reading source. This made the work of the participants difficult to figure out. Teachers need to remind students about this aspect of reading practice on the Internet.

3. Summarizing Practice

In the present study, no quantitative measurement was made of any improvement in writing a summary. Nevertheless, judging by the responses to the open-ended questionnaire, the students seemed to have experienced satisfaction at being able to practice this exercise. As a result, they felt their English had improved, and that they had learned some useful vocabulary items.

As mentioned earlier, a comparison of the total number of activities on the Cyworld involving the 'High' and 'Low' groups (see Table 1), shows that the 'High' group not only practiced more than the 'Low' group, but also engaged in more 'Listen & Summary' and 'Read & Summary' exercises than 'Listen only' and 'Read only' tasks, in comparison with the 'Low' group. These results suggest that for listening and reading assignments outside of the classroom, practicing the writing of summary seems highly desirable. This is because when students were asked to summarize the content of a listening or reading passage, they appeared to pay more attention to listening or reading in order to understand the main idea. As a result, even in out-of-class situations without the presence of the teacher, the students may be inclined to concentrate on the activity. Although the 'Low' group took part in listening and reading exercises on the Internet at least a few times, as they focused more on 'Listen or Read only' without practicing the summary, this could have resulted in their going through the motions without concentrating on understanding the gist. Consequently, their listening and reading comprehension may have suffered and failed to improve.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the effects of Internet-based English practice outside the classroom on listening and reading, by using Internet sites and a Cyworld bulletin board. The findings showed that the listening and reading comprehension of the participants who exercised these skills regularly on a Cyworld bulletin board, significantly improved compared with those who practiced less. These findings appear to indicate that continued practice on the Cyworld could well improve listening and reading competence. The results also suggest that student-centered Internet and bulletin board listening and reading activities might be more effective if accompanied by the writing of summaries of the text content. In this kind of task the students pay greater attention to understanding the subject-matter. A further point is that the participants in this study gave mostly favorable responses to Internet-based listening and reading practice.

Although many universities have tried to set up multi-media labs for English practice, the fact that class hours are still generally limited to about 2 or 3 hours per week, especially for those not majoring in English, the use of specific Internet sites and a bulletin board could be an effective alternative for providing opportunities for students to practice listening and reading skills in an EFL context. However, as there were only 16 students in the study, which is the limitation of the study, the results could not be generalized but only used as a guide. As most of the previous studies focused on the effects of the use of the Internet for listening and reading practice at secondary level, further studies are needed at tertiary level. Extra work is also needed to examine other ways of using the Internet to practice English outside of the classroom in an EFL context.

REFERENCES

- Bae, J. Y. (2005). *English education through the Internet: Focused on the advantages and disadvantages of English education through the Internet*. Unpublished master's thesis. Dankook University, Seoul.
- Baik, C. (2002). *A study on improving English listening skills using the Internet*. Unpublished master's thesis. Dong-A University, Busan.

- Becker, J. (1992). Computers in schools today: Some basic derivations. *American Journal of Education*, 1, 98-119.
- Bruffee, K. A. (1993). *Collaborative learning: Higher education, interdependence, and the authority of knowledge*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Byeon, Y. H. (2002). *An Internet-based English education*. Unpublished master's thesis. SungKyunKwan University, Seoul.
- Cha, K. (2000). A study of impediments in listening to English news broadcasts. *English Teaching*, 55(1), 201-225.
- Cheong, G. S. (2000). *High school English and the use of the Internet*. Unpublished master's thesis. SungKyunKwan University, Seoul.
- Choi, S., & Lee, Y. (2003). The effectiveness of performing Internet-based English assignments in secondary English education. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 6(2), 175-193.
- Chong, H. J. (1999). A study on the effectiveness of the Internet in teaching and learning English reading for a vocational high school in Korea. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 2(2), 207-244.
- Eo, J. (2001). *A study on the effective teaching methods for improving the English listening comprehension*. Unpublished master's thesis. Konkuk University, Seoul.
- Heo, J. (2003). The use of the Internet for the effective English listening. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 6(2), 265-278.
- Kang, H. S. (1999). A study of the effectiveness of Internet English reading class. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 2(2), 88-103.
- Kim, H. (2002). *A study on Internet sites for improving English listening skills*. Unpublished master's thesis. Chung-Ang University, Seoul.
- Kim, I. S. (1999). The new paradigm for English education in the 21st century. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 2(1), 55-73.
- Kim, S. Y. (2005). *A study of teaching culture through the Internet: For middle school English*. Unpublished master's thesis. HongIk University, Seoul.
- Kim, Y. G. (2005). *A study on teaching English reading through Internet English newspaper*. Unpublished master's thesis. Chung-Ang University, Seoul.
- Lee, H. E. (2003). *Teaching of English through Internet for the middle school students*. Unpublished master's thesis. Hannam University, Daejeon.
- Lee, S. (2000). Teaching writing using a bulletin board on the Internet: A preliminary study. *English Teaching*, 55(3), 171-191.

- Lim, M. H. (2002). *A study on teaching and learning utilizing Internet in middle school English education*. Unpublished master's thesis. Yonsei University, Seoul.
- Morris, J. (1993). *The Internet*. Utah State Office of Education.
- Pang, M. S. (1999). Theories and practices on the Internet-based teaching and learning in language subjects: The case of EDUNET. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 2(2), 136-154.
- Park, I. H. (2001). *The English education through the Internet: Improving reading methods*. Unpublished master's thesis. HongIk University, Seoul.
- Park, S. J. (2002). *A study on Internet sites for using English reading materials*. Unpublished master's thesis. Chung-Ang University, Seoul.
- Park, S. S. (1999). *The effect of multimedia instruction on English reading comprehension*. Unpublished master's thesis. Yonsei University, Seoul.
- Shim, H. (2000). *A study of listening instruction using the Internet homepage*. Unpublished master's thesis. Yonsei University, Seoul.
- Shin, G. (1999). Using homepages in teaching college English with focus on reading. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 2(1), 35-54.
- Song, J. (2006). Key-pal and peer revision writing activities on the Cyworld club of the Internet. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 9(1), 30-52.
- Song, Y. H. (2001). *An analysis of communication types in online English learning sites*. Unpublished master's thesis. Yonsei University, Seoul.
- Sung, I. H. (1998). Planning teaching English via the Internet. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 1(1), 117-140.
- Yoon, J. S. (1999). A case study on using the Internet for English teaching and learning. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 2(2), 155-206.
- Warschauer, M. (1997). Computer-mediated collaborative learning: Theory and practice. *Modern Language Journal*, 81(4), 470-481.

APPENDIX

List of Internet Sites Used

1. www.dailyenglish.com (15 students)
2. www.koreaherold.com (10 students)
3. www.hackerstoic.com (10 students)
4. www.cnn.com (4 students)

5. www.ytn.co.kr (4 students)
6. www.bbc.co.uk (2 students)
7. <http://times.hankooki.com> : Korea Times (2 students)
8. <http://joongangdaily.joins.com> : Joongang Daily (2 students)
9. www.times.com (1 student)
10. www.ihl.com : International Herald Tribune (1 student)
11. www.newsweek.com (1 student)
12. <http://abcnews.go.com> (1 student)
13. Another 16 Korean Internet sites (Each was used by 1 student)

Examples in: English**Applicable Languages: English****Applicable Levels: College**

Jeong-Weon Song
Department of English Language & Literature
Konkuk University
1 Hwayang-dong, Gwangjin-gu
Seoul 143-701, Korea
CP: 018-280-9207
Email: edujws@hotmail.com

Received in April, 2006

Reviewed in May, 2006

Revised version received in June, 2006