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Possibility and Challenge of Using Internet for International Exchange - Focused on Korean Students' Views-

Shin-hye, Heo

Professor, Department of History Education, Hannam University, Korea)
E-mail angelashh@hnu.kr

Abstract

International exchange implementing the Internet began inevitably due to the pandemic, but it provided Digital Nomads with new experiences in their lives using the Internet. This study the possibility and challenge of international exchange implementing the Internet identified. To this end, we explored its strengths and weaknesses through interviews and descriptions of students who participated in international exchange. As a result, we identified that students were positive in the diverse aspects of communication tools and ways, whereas they were negative because they felt difficulties in the physical environment, inaccessible physical conditions especially. They were also negative in the emotional exchange, an ice-breaking which needed much more time than offline exchange. Therefore, we identified in the case of designing or conducting student activities implementing the Internet, including international exchange, the possibility of activities implementing the Internet could be much more extended if their developer various programs considered in the introduction step.

1. Introduction

International exchange using the Internet inevitably began due to the pandemic. International exchange plays a significant role in university education, but it was discontinued anymore. Universities of Korea were no exception. Face-to-face research exchanges between Korea and Japan were also stopped. Thus, the researchers from both countries tried to students' exchange using the Internet after starting online exchanges.

In the past, international exchanges meant contracts and negotiations through diplomatic activities between the states. With the development of information and communication technology (ICT), various active subjects such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), companies, universities, schools, and regional governments are exchanging official and informal for cooperative relationships [1, 2].

There are relatively few studies on international exchange. The research on international exchange can be classified into two main categories: Educational Institutions' exchange (including universities and schools) and regional governments' exchange [3, 4]. Most of them were school-centered exchanges. Their purpose was to improve students' perception and learning competency. Studies have mainly focused on reports of school-oriented exchanges rather than universities, namely teenage exchanges. These schools have accumulated programs for international exchange and cooperation to improve their global citizenship education and foreign language skills before the pandemic. These studies have focused on examining changes in cultural perceptions or the effects of learning foreign languages [5-7].

Although international exchanges are crucial in university, studies on their activation are rare. International exchange programs are for cultivating learners to became global leader, it is one of the obligations of university education [8, 9]. International exchange in universities can be more than just exchanges. These also need to be treated as critical in aspects of specialization and competitiveness of universities. These programs can be successful and sustainable when designed from the participants' perspective [9].

Therefore, this study aims to analyze participants' views and explore implications to identify the possibilities and challenges of international exchanges of university students using the Internet. In particular, the possibilities and limitations are identified in the process of international exchange using the Internet by university students who have become familiar with online meetings and online exchanges. Students at A University have been participating in online international exchange activities every year since 2021. This study focused on the views of participants in 2021 and 2022. Therefore, this study tried to identify the possibilities and challenges of international exchange using the Internet and explore its implications.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants and Research Context

The participants of this study were the volunteers of A university for international exchange through the Internet (via ZOOM) in 2021 and 2022. They were all students majoring in history education at A university in South Korea. All of A university students submitted reports describing one's impressions about international exchange activities. The spread of the pandemic has halted face-to-face exchanges between researchers. So, researchers started online exchanges and then tried to exchange students using the Internet. Researchers in Korea and Japan have been doing exchange activities for college students implementing the Internet.

For the international exchange activity implementing the Internet, three universities in Korea and two universities in Japan participated in 2021. In the Second year, 2022, two universities in Korea and two universities in Japan participated. In 2021 and 2022, new participants joined international exchanges implementing the Internet every year. At the University of A in Korea, six students participated in 2021, and five did in 2022. The A university students of Korea have participated in the following ways.

Table 1 shows participants' activities and their tools depending on the step. Activities were classified into three steps, pre-activity, exchange activity, and post-activity. Participants officially did all-day online discussion activities using Internet tools in twice a year. Participants decided on the group they were interested in before joining the discussion via ZOOM and then discussed it in the group room with others with the same interests.

Table 1. International Exchange Activity via ZOOM

	Step	Tool	Activity
Preparing Meeting		ZOOM & Offline	Orientation Inquiry about participants' motivation (*) Choosing groups according to their interests
	Pre-activity	ZOOM	Presenting and giving feedback on topics of participants
Main activity	1st exchange activity	ZOOM	Introduce and interact with all of the participants Presenting all of the participants' topics (PPT) Discussing groups and Q&A Determining topics to investigate together in each group Sharing results of group discussion
	Post-activity	ZOOM & Offline	Online Reflection Meeting (*) Offline reflection meeting (*) Submit Report (*)
	Pre-activity	ZOOM	Presenting and giving feedback on topics of participants
Main activity	2nd exchange activity	ZOOM	Presenting all of the participants' topics (PPT) Discussing groups and Q&A Making PPT about discussion results with co-workers Presenting of the representative of groups and Q&A Giving Certification for Participating Survey through Google Doc.
	Post-activity	ZOOM & Offline	Online Reflection Meeting (*) Offline reflection meeting (*) Submit Report (*)
Final meeting		ZOOM & Offline	Offline Reflection Meeting (*)

As shown in Table 1, On the first discussion day, all students presented their own' topics searched, and they determined a common topic based on their presentation through discussion. After that, they investigated the topic together. On the second discussion day, students reviewed and shared topics in their group. After the first discussion, all group members shared the preparation tasks for the second discussion, and students used various Internet tools to share their opinions. Although the frequency of exchanges differs depending on the characteristics of the group, they were the same in that they were Internet-based exchanges.

After the two discussion activities, students from University A had an online and offline meeting as a follow-up activity. It was an activity to share reflections and suggestions on international exchange activities using the Internet. All participants of the A University had submitted reports including their own experiences and reflections. Therefore, this study focused on the reports written by A university students who had participated in 2021 and 2022.

2.2 Data Collection

Data has been collected in various ways. It was participants' reports and interviews several times. Interviews and reports with open-ended writing were collected with qualitative methods to examine participants' views. All students of the A University have submitted reports describing their impressions of the international exchange activities through the Internet. Therefore, this study was based on reports written by A university students of Korea and interviews with them in 2021 and 2022.

Table 2 shows the types and timing of data collected in this study. As shown in Table 2 below, this study used interviews with six participants in 2021, their reports, and their final essays. It is the items marked (*) in Table 1 International Exchange Activity via ZOOM. In 2022, it also collected the same materials from five participants.

Table 2. Type and Step of Collecting Data

Year	Step	Type
2021&2022	Preparing Meeting	Interviews
		Brief writings about their motivations
2021&2022	After 1st exchange activity	Interviews
		Reports describing their impressions
2021&2022	After 2nd exchange activity	Interviews
		Reports describing their impressions
2021&2022	Final meeting	Interviews
		Reports describing their impressions and suggestions

2.3 Data Analysis

For analyzing data, the 'making a componential analysis was adapted, which is one of the qualitative methods. Componential analysis is the systematic search for the attributes (components of the meaning) associated with cultural categories. A "component" is another term for "unit". Thus, componential analysis is looking for the units of meaning that people have assigned to their cultural categories. An attribute is any element of information regularly associated with a cultural category. A componential analysis includes the entire process of searching for contrasts, sorting them out, grouping some as dimensions of contrast, and entering all this information into the paradigm. It also includes verifying this information through participant interviews [10]. Therefore, this study analyzed and categorized students' interview records and brief writings around a page of A4 about the reflections on international exchange through the Internet.

3. Results

3.1 What did they do from International Exchange via ZOOM?

As shown in Chapter 2, students selected the group they wanted to participate in before joining in exchange activities. In 2021, five groups had been discussed about history, politics, economy, culture, and education fields. And there were four groups of the history, politics, environment, and education fields in 2022. All groups consisted of students from different universities to create environments in which various opinions could be discussed.

International exchange activities implementing the Internet can be divided into three stages. In the first stage, which is in pre-activity, it had five times Zoom meetings and an offline meeting. It was for preparing

steps for international exchange activities, which was an Orientation including identifications of participants' motivation and interest in fields.

The second step, the international exchange activity, was conducted two times through discussion activities via ZOOM. Both the first and second rounds were online exchanges using various Internet tools. In the first exchange activity, participants presented topics of their interests. After that, they discussed selecting the topic to investigate together. At the 2nd exchange activity, they shared their research results on that topic determined at the 1st exchange activity and made a joint report through a Q&A process. These results were reported in Korean and Japanese by the co-representatives of each group in front of all participants. Finally, in the post-activity, online and offline meetings were for students from University A, and it was mainly to share reflections and suggestions on the first and second exchange activities.

In the descriptions of A university participants, both positive and negative aspects of international exchange activities implementing the Internet appeared. The positive aspect was mainly related to tools to communicate in various ways and the efficiency of using the Internet. They focused on the efficiency of the functions that accompany technology. In other words, these Internet functions could help overcome the temporal and spatial constraints that were the highest barriers to international exchange. Therefore, the positive aspect was described as related to the efficiency matters of Internet functions.

On the other hand, since the Internet usage environment varied greatly depending on the participants, sometimes activities were halted. When the Internet environment was not smooth, all activities were stopped at once. That was regardless of individual competence or will for activity. Therefore, problems with the physical environment of the Internet were strongly related to the negative aspects in the students' descriptions.

3.2 What did they describe about the Possibilities and Challenges of Using the Internet?

The description of the participants could be categorized through the component analysis method introduced in chapter 2, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Table 3. Result of Component Analysis: Perspective According to Domain

Domain	Action	Attitude
Access information	instant access	positive
	individualized access	positive
	customized access	positive
	inaccessible	negative
Communication tool	various tools	positive
	difficulty in adapting to unfamiliar tools	negative
	to hesitant at doing small talk	negative
	to not easy ice-breaking	negative

As can be seen from the analysis results above, students' views can be classified into two main domains. First, it is the aspect of access to information. Through various tools using the Internet, you can not only immediately check all information, but you can also access the information you want to know at any time. Therefore, students described the great advantage of being able to access individual information and customized information. However, due to qualitative differences in communication technology depending on the student's environment, access to this information was frequently challenging. All exchange activities,

including discussion, were completely excluded in this situation. Discussions were sometimes interrupted because members of the same group had to wait in unpredictable circumstances.

The second domain was related to the aspect of the means of communication. Students could express their opinions and listen to other's views through various Internet functions. It was mainly the screen-sharing function, the shared document function, and the chat function. Students described that technology played a critical role in improving the quality of the discussion by using various tools and functions of the Internet for communication. However, it took time to adapt to unfamiliar tools because the tools familiar to each country were different. In other words, the students described that there were times when states and states changed because it took time to get used to new tools rather than focusing on the content of the discussion.

4. Discussion

Since previous international exchange activities were based on face-to-face contact, they had a lot of temporal and spatial limitations. Although online international exchanges began because of COVID-19, findings from the views of participants showed the possibilities and strength of online activities.

First, by becoming familiar with implementing technology that was unfamiliar, skills for acquiring and applying new skills have been improved. It provided an opportunity to contribute to international understanding and understanding of other cultures in expanding the ability to utilize technology.

Second, these experiences gained in using new technologies have led to an expansion of digital literacy. In other words, the expansion of understanding of internet functions and tools mainly implemented by foreigners has led to an expansion of interest and comprehension of various digital tools. This experience has also improved the learning attitude to acquire new skills and use them in new environments.

Third, international exchange activities, which have many constraints in temporal and spatial aspects, were possible because of the implementation of the Internet. The Internet was crucial to international exchange activities. It would also be impossible without videoconferencing tools such as ZOOM. Therefore, students' experience of using the Internet in international exchange activities provided a practical learning of the function and role of the Internet. It made university students, who were called digital natives but limited use in real life and learning, recognize the new possibility of implementing the Internet [11-13]. In that, they realized a realistic sense of how the role and function of the Internet could change our lives.

The findings of this study also showed the weakness of online international exchange. At the beginning of the exchange activity, students had been troubled with the ice-breaking problems. It usually needs to form a rapport by having small talks or sharing emotional exchanges, which was difficult. We identified that for making successful online exchanges, much more carefulness is needed in designing or proceeding with students' activities implementing the Internet.

5. Conclusion

Although International exchange implementing the Internet began due to the pandemic, this exchange is still in progress. It was possible to communicate directly beyond the limits of time and space through online exchange because of the use of technology. This exchange provided new experiences both for students and educators. These experiences gave the students an awareness opportunity that it could operate as a new environment for international exchange activities. The findings of this study have important implications for

educators and curriculum developers for online exchange activities. We could identify the need to design ice-breakings carefully for much smoother internet exchange activities. That was a big challenge because it was difficult to have vividness and realism. It was also a challenge because it was difficult to catch others' emotions and reactions vividly. Especially at the beginning of the student's activity, it usually needs to form a rapport by having small talks or sharing emotional exchanges, which was not easy. It is essential to deepen and thicken student's exchanges and discussions qualitatively. But it was not only so hard to create such atmospheres but also took a long time on the Internet.

Therefore, this point should not be overlooked when designing or proceeding with students' activities implementing the Internet. The introduction of ice-breakings needs to pay more attention to than offline activities. Furthermore, it should be actively considered the introduction of various ideas and student activities to solve such difficulties.

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