

# A Study on professors' and learners' perceptions of real-time Online Korean Studies Courses

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## Abstract

This study suggests utilization of a real-time online courses for Korean Studies, and intends to investigate the effectiveness of Global E-School courses through surveys. Despite the increasing needs for Korean Studies courses at universities abroad, access to these courses still remains low; this is because most of the specialized Korean Studies courses in diverse topics are still conducted in Korea. For this purpose, E-Learning can be used, but its utilization is low because of the limited interactions between professors and learners. A satisfaction survey was divided into two parts: 1) program contents and 2) operation methods. Twenty-four professors and 73 learners, from both Korea and overseas, participated in the survey. The results showed that most of the professors and learners were satisfied with the contents of the programs and the way they were operated. However, in terms of enhancing learner motivation and technical aspects, they showed low level of satisfaction, implying needs for improvement. This finding is meaningful in that it suggests the possibility of using real-time online courses to open of Korean Studies courses at universities outside Korea.

**Keywords:** Online Education, Real-time online courses, Korean Studies, Satisfaction Survey, Questionnaires

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the demand for Korean Studies at foreign universities, the needed courses are not provided adequately. Due to difficulties in securing specialists outside Korea, it is challenging to provide courses in subjects such as Korean Politics, Economics, Society, Culture, and Literature. As an alternative to overcome these practical constraints, we can utilize online education, which is currently developing at a

rapid pace. However, non-face-to-face non-real-time online education has limitations in that it lacks in-depth interactions between professors and learners.

Global E-School (E-School), a real-time online course, is a program that can solve for these problems. The Korea Foundation collaborated with 11 Korean universities including Ewha Womans University (as of 2016) to deliver 112 Korean Studies lectures to 35 countries. This program provided high-quality Korean studies courses in real-time to students in universities abroad, who have limited access to high-quality Korean Studies courses due to curriculum and faculty restrictions.

The purpose of this study is to find out whether these real-time online courses can be an alternative way to meet foreign university demand for Korean Studies lectures. To do this, we conducted a satisfaction survey of professors and learners who had participated in the Ewha Womans University<sup>1</sup> E-School program to verify the effectiveness of real-time online courses. The research questions of this paper are as follows.

- 1) How satisfied are professors and the learners with the contents of real-time online lectures?
- 2) How satisfied are the professors and learners with how the professors and learners interact in real-time online lectures?

## BACKGROUND

Teaching and learning methods have changed over time. Traditional offline teaching and learning have transformed into web-based learning, virtual learning, and cyber-learning thanks to developments in science and technology and has been referred as E-learning or electronic learning<sup>2</sup>. Since then, the development and popularization of mobile devices have led to m-learning that enables teaching and learning on the move.

<sup>1</sup> At the annual evaluation, the Korea Foundation rated Ewha Womans University as the best performer among E-School participating universities for three years in a row (2012, 2013, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Rosenberg [1] discussed e-learning as ways to utilize internet technology to improve learning. Although the "e" could be defined in various ways,

including exploration, experience, engagement, ease of use, empowerment, extension, and expansion, most agree it stands for "electronic" as in electronic learning.

However, because the advantages of offline teaching and learning methods cannot be completely replaced by online teaching and learning, blended learning and flipped learning<sup>3</sup>, which combine advantages of online and offline, are also utilized. In addition, there are MOOCs (massive open online courses) which allows anyone to access the best courses from the world's leading universities online for free. In Korea, most universities are implementing K-MOOCs, and the scale is expanding because of the high accessibility for learners.

The teaching and learning techniques described above differ in the specifics but they have common points in that they are based online and they have advantages and disadvantages accordingly. Though confined to language learning, Nunan [2] tested the learning effectiveness of e-learning and found that it strengthened the cohesiveness of the professor and the learner and promoted the learning. Khan [3], Windeatt, Hardisty and Eastment [4], Clark and Mayer [5], Kern, Ware, and Warschauer [6], Lee [7-8], Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia and Jones [9] also found that online learning can provide learners with diverse learning materials, stimulate interest and motivation in learning, and enhance learning through various interactions, although they are not actually real-world interactions.

However, there are study findings that online teaching and learning are ineffective. Sotillo [10], Kim [11], and Lee and Pyo [12] found that online teaching and learning were not as effective as traditional methods; in particular, the communication is not bi-directional, but guided by self-learning; as such the programs are difficult to customized and place heavy burdens on learners. Additionally, Ware [13] found that asynchronous communication between professors and learners makes it difficult to communicate smoothly and immediately, and can waste time. In addition, users are becoming more familiar with digital technology, but e-learning utilization rates may be low because professors and learners are unfamiliar with these digital technologies.

Despite the aforementioned limitations of online teaching and learning, the high access is especially useful for students who want to pursue Korean Studies outside of Korea because the leading universities that offer Korean Studies expertise are located in Korea, but the best experts are also located in Korea, so learners' physical access to lectures is very low. In other words, online options such as K-MOOCs are alternative for foreign learners.

However, one cannot hope to fully enjoy the merits of online

learning without overcoming the limitations mentioned above and real-time online lectures can overcome the asynchronous natures of online courses. This has various advantages.

First, professors can actively interact with learners in real-time online lectures just as in offline ones. Second, real-time online lectures maximize efficiency by allowing two or more foreign universities to hold lectures at the same time. Above all, learners of diverse cultures can enhance their global understanding through interacting with each other. In fact, at Ewha Womans University E-School, three or more foreign universities held the same courses at the same time and confirmed their effectiveness.

There may be questions about the technical feasibility of such as real-time online teaching. However, E-School executed real-time online lectures based on information and communication technology. In particular, E-School lectures can be sent out to regular lecture rooms, and do not necessarily require special equipment. Most lectures can be delivered to rooms with regular computer, microphone and loudspeaker facilities, which most universities have, and Therefore, it is possible to send Korean Studies lectures without difficulty even in areas where expensive facilities are not available. This suggests vast possibilities of utilizing real-time online lectures. However, it is still necessary to assess their practical use, but we want to clarify this with an E-School satisfaction survey.

## METHODS

### Participants

We conducted the survey on real-time online Korean Studies lectures both semesters in 2016<sup>4</sup>. A total of 97 professors and learners participated in the survey. The professors were 10 Korean professors at domestic universities and 14 foreign professors who managed administrative work for their universities. The learners were randomly selected among the total of 423 students involved in the program. Many survey participants already had experienced real-time online Korean Studies courses. Korean professors had held real-time lectures before the semester, and 12 (85.7%) foreign professors had previously opened and operated real-time online Korean Studies classes. Forty-two of the learners (57.5%) also had previous experience with taking real-time online Korean Studies courses.

## INSTRUMENT

We administered the surveys via Google's online survey tool.

China, National University of Mongolia in Mongolia, Universidad de Colima in Mexico, Waseda University in Japan, and the Royal University of Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Provided in English or Korean, the courses covered topics such as Korean politics, economics, society, culture, and languages, including Pop Goes Korea, North Korean Pop Culture, Korean Society and Politics, History of Korean Economy, Leadership & Management of Human Service Organization, The Political Economy of Korean Development, and War and Peace.

<sup>3</sup> Blended learning uses both online and offline at teaching and learning site, while flipped learning requires attending online class before attending offline one.

<sup>4</sup> In 2016, Global E-School program was transmitted to Gothe-Universität Frankfurt am Main and Universität Bonn in Germany, University of Nairobi in Kenya, University of Middlebury in the United States, Chulalongcorn University, Naresuan University, Silapakorn University, and Burapa University in Thailand, Hong Kong University and Fudan University in

There were two surveys, one for the professors and one for learners; the questionnaire for the lecturers was provided in Korean, and the other was provided in Korean and English. We divided the questionnaire into two parts to meet the purpose of this study: satisfaction with the program contents and satisfaction with the operation of real-time online lectures. The response to each item was a rating on a four-point scale of “not satisfied at all” (1 point), “not satisfied” (2 points), “satisfied” (3 points), or “very satisfied” (4 points); respondents entered scores in one box and their individual opinions in a separate box. The Table 1 shows the structure and contents of the questionnaire.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to investigate the satisfaction of professors and learners with real-time online Korean Studies

lectures. We used a survey questionnaire to examine the satisfaction with the course contents and the lecture operations, and to confirm the effectiveness of real-time online Korean lectures. We conducted the survey between November and December 2016 for a total of eight weeks with participants of lectures that were already or at least 70% completed. We analyzed the collected data through descriptive statistics.

## RESULTS

### Survey results for foreign professors

#### Satisfaction with program contents

In this study, we examined the satisfaction with real-time online courses of Korean and foreign professors, and the survey results for professors are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 1.** Structure and contents of the survey

Area survey		Questions for professors	Questions for learners
Contents of program	Overall Score	Overall satisfaction with the class	Overall satisfaction with the class
	Contents of class	Availability of various subjects	Availability of various subjects
		Increase in the interest in Korean Studies in the local universities	Acquisition of professional knowledge through the lectures
			Motivation for learners
		Acquisition of professional knowledge	Increase in the academic interest in Korean Studies
			Connectivity between the lectures and careers
Motivation for learners	Exposure to Korean pop culture		
	Willingness to recommend the lecture to others		
Operation method	Transmission of lectures	Effectiveness of real-time online courses	Effectiveness of real-time online courses
		Satisfaction with technology	Satisfaction level with technology
	Communication and Interaction	Level of interaction between professors and learners	Level of interaction with professors

**Table 2.** Korean and foreign professors' satisfaction with e-learning courses

Items		Group	Not satisfied at all (1 pt)	Not satisfied (2 pts)	Satisfied (3 pts)	Very satisfied (4 pts)	Total	Average satisfaction (Max 4 pts)
Overall satisfaction	Overall satisfaction with lectures	Korea	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	8 (80%)	10 (100%)	3.7
		Foreign	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (21.4%)	11 (78.6%)	14 (100%)	3.8
Lecture contents	Availability of various subjects	Korea	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	4
		Foreign	0 (0%)	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)	10 (71.4%)	14 (100%)	3.6
	Increase in the interest in Korean Studies in local universities	Korea	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)	3.8
		Foreign	0 (0%)	1 (7.1%)	6 (42.9%)	7 (50%)	14 (100%)	3.8
	Acquisition of professional knowledge	Korea	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	8 (80%)	10 (100%)	4
		Foreign	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (21.4%)	11 (78.6%)	14 (100%)	3.8
	Motivation for learners	Korea	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)	3.9
		Foreign	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (7.1%)	13 (92.9%)	14 (100%)	3.2

**Table 3.** Korean and foreign professors' satisfaction with lecture operations

Items asked to professors		Group	Not satisfied at all (1 pt)	Not satisfied (2 pts)	Satisfied (3 pts)	Very satisfied (4 pts)	Total	Average satisfaction (Max 4 pts)
Transmission of lectures	Effectiveness of real-time online courses	Korean	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)	3.9
		Foreign	0 (0%)	2 (14.3%)	4 (28.6%)	8 (57.1%)	14 (100%)	3.4
	Satisfaction level on technology	Korean	0 (0%)	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	10 (100%)	2.7
		Foreign	0 (0%)	2 (14.3%)	10 (71.4%)	2 (14.3%)	14 (100%)	3.0
Communication and Interaction	Interaction between professor and learner	Korean	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	10 (100%)	3.3
		Foreign	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (28.6%)	10 (71.4%)	14 (100%)	3.7

Professors rated the program contents positively. Both the Korean and foreign professors were highly satisfied with the lectures with overall scores of 3.7 and 3.8, respectively. In particular, 90% of the Korea professors and 100% of the foreign professors chose "satisfied" or "very satisfied". For lecture contents, all scores averaged more than 3.2 points, indicating the professor's high satisfaction with the program contents. This shows that real-time online lectures can be offered on various aspects of Korean Studies to foreign universities, and enable learners to acquire professional knowledge, and positively influence learners' interest in Korean

Studies and motivation for learning. In particular, it is noteworthy that both Korean and foreign professors showed average scores near 4 points, the maximum for learners' acquiring professional knowledge. This suggests that real-time online courses can contribute to securing expertise in Korean Studies abroad.

However, 14.3% of foreign professors felt that course diversity was limited, and 7.1% felt that the local universities' interest in Korean Studies did not increase. The reason could be found in the individual opinion sections; Foreign professors asked that more diverse Korean Studies courses be offered. This shows

that real-time online lectures are helpful, but they still need wider range of subjects. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the scope of real-time online courses to provide Korean Studies lectures that will satisfy the demands of foreign universities.

### **Satisfaction with program operations**

We conducted this study to investigate satisfaction with real-time online lecture operations in order to assess their technical effectiveness and the degree of interaction between professor and learner. The results are shown in Table 3 below.

Professors positively evaluated how real-time online courses were run; the satisfaction rating was 3.4 points or higher regarding effectiveness of the courses. All (100%) Korean professors and 85.7% of foreign professors were satisfied in general, the professors found the courses to be very helpful. However, 14.3% of foreign professors selected “not satisfied,” and their entered reasons in the individual opinions sections. A few mentioned that the course did not involve any seminars, which was common in local courses; others mentioned that the connection was often unstable for the lectures in Thailand, which had four lectures delivered simultaneously. This suggests that Korean lecture formats need to be diversified in line with local system available, and simultaneous one-to-many lectures at several universities require more technical support.

Technical satisfaction aspect was generally acceptable with scores of 2.7 or more. Half of Korean professors and 14.3% of foreign professors responded that they were unsatisfied, and satisfaction with technical aspects showed low scores compared with other items; this suggests that despite the effectiveness of real-time online lectures, there is still room for improvement in the technical aspects. In particular, Korean professors experienced more difficulties, although appears that this is because these professors must manipulate unfamiliar equipment as they teach. The camera in the video classroom follows the lecture professor, but it must be checked in real time to see if the focus is on the professor. Additionally, more attention is necessary when the lecturer writes on board or uses on-screen projection. If the foreign universities do not have equipment such as echo cancellers that prevent microphones from making sound, the Korean professors must turn their microphones off and on during their lectures. It is clear that this needs to be improved, although it does seem that the matter could be resolved by familiarizing instructors and teaching assistant with lecture room equipment.

For interactions between the professors and the learners, the satisfaction score was higher than 3.3 points. Most (90%) of

Korean professors and 100% of foreign professors chose “satisfied” or “very satisfied”. In other words, real-time online lectures enabled smooth interaction. It is expected that real-time online lectures will overcome the limits of existing e-learning.

As the result for lecture operation shows, the professors showed high satisfaction. It is noteworthy that the professors were particularly satisfied with the effectiveness of real-time online courses and the possibility of interaction between professors and learners. However, we did find that technical aspects need to be addressed to make this possible.

### **Survey results for learners**

#### **Satisfaction with program contents**

We also conducted a survey with course learners on satisfaction with program contents. The results are shown in Table 4 below.

The learners were very positive about the program just as the professors were; the average satisfaction score was 3.8 points, which suggests that the real-time online course met the needs of learners of Korean Language and Korean Studies lectures. However, 6.9% of the learners chose “not satisfied” and entered their reasons the individual opinion sections. These learners took their lectures in Korean and said it was difficult to understand the Korean explanations. In order to improve this, the professors need more training, and they may need to use lecture meta-language considering learners’ Korean proficiency.

The learners showed high satisfaction with lecture contents, with average scores of more than 3.2 points. Particularly, learners showed high satisfaction with the diversity of subjects, acquiring professional knowledge, and learning motivation, which led to high willingness to recommend the lectures to others. However, 15.1% of responses regarding connections between the lectures and future careers and 23.3% of responses regarding exposure to Korea pop culture were marked “not satisfied”. This shows that the Korean Studies courses did not fully meet the needs and expectations of some learners and suggests a future direction for these course lectures. To increase the links with future careers, the Korean Studies curriculum needs to provide more employment information and internship opportunities. In addition, students who want to enter graduate school will need information on university entry and scholarship opportunities.

**Table 4.** Learners' satisfaction with program contents

	Items	Not satisfied at all (1 pt)	Not satisfied (2 pts)	Satisfied (3 pts)	Very satisfied (4 pts)	Total	Average satisfaction (Max 4 pts)
Overall satisfaction	Overall satisfaction with lectures	0 (0%)	5 (6.9%)	22 (30.1%)	46 (63%)	73 (100%)	3.8
Lecture contents	Availability of various subjects	0 (0%)	4 (5.5%)	32 (43.8%)	37 (50.7%)	73 (100%)	3.5
	Acquisition of professional knowledge	0 (0%)	3 (4.1%)	29 (39.7%)	41 (56.2%)	73 (100%)	3.5
	Motivation for learners	0 (0%)	4 (5.5%)	26 (35.6%)	43 (58.9%)	73 (100%)	3.5
	Increase in the academic interest in Korean Studies	1 (1.4%)	5 (6.8%)	31 (42.5%)	36 (49.3%)	73 (100%)	3.4
	Connectivity between the lectures and careers	0 (0%)	11 (15.1%)	29 (39.7%)	33 (45.2%)	73 (100%)	3.3
	Exposure to Korean pop culture	2 (2.7%)	15 (20.6%)	19 (26%)	37 (50.7%)	73 (100%)	3.2
	Willingness to recommend the lectures to others	0 (0%)	4 (5.5%)	28 (38.3%)	41 (56.2%)	73 (100%)	3.5

These results show that learners are overall satisfied with the program contents. It should be noted that they particularly appreciated being able to take lectures on diverse subjects and acquire professional knowledge through real-time online courses, which should have led to high willingness to recommend the lectures. However, the lecture professors need to use lecture language that is appropriate to learners' skill levels, and should to provide information on employment and ongoing education.

#### Satisfaction with program operations

We also investigated the learners' satisfaction with the lecture operations. The results are shown in Table 5 below.

The learners gave positive feedback on how lectures were operated, just as the professors did; the average satisfaction score was more than 3.3. Nearly all learners, 91.8%, responded that they were satisfied with the effectiveness of the real-time online courses, 93.1% satisfied with the technical aspects, and 94.5% were satisfied with the interaction level with the professors, which was more than percentage of professors who were also highly satisfied. In other words, learners were more generous about the technical problems in foreign universities than the professors were.

However, there was still a small portion of learners who expressed negative views on the technical aspects. Although

the percentage was low at 6.8%, they still chose "not satisfied." In other words, learners were more tolerant than the professors, but they still recognized the technical problems with the courses. Therefore, we can conclude that although people were generally satisfied with real-time online lectures, technical improvements are still needed.

#### DISCUSSION

Foreign universities are increasingly demanding more Korean Studies courses on various topics. However, because of the practical constraints on the supply of Korean Studies experts, it is difficult for local learners to take these lectures. In particular, as the demand for graduate courses is increasing, opening and expansion Korean Studies course availability is important. Given the high demand for courses and the lack of instructors, real-time online courses can be an alternative.

The satisfaction survey results we found in this study showed the potential of online courses given that, both the professors and the learners showed positive responses to the lecture contents and program operations. Positive survey results for real-time online lectures suggest the following possibilities:

First, real-time online lectures enable offering courses that are physically difficult to hold overseas. Because lectures can be held even at universities with no Korean Studies professors on the ground, real-time lectures can meet students' diverse

learning needs. As such, real-time online courses such as E-School are meaningful in that they can broaden students' choices.

Second, through real-time online courses, academic subjects with regional specialty and expertise such as Korean Studies can be further developed. In the individual opinion sections, both the foreign professors and the learners requested more specialized lectures for graduate students take. Real-time online lectures can fulfill these needs.

Third, real-time online courses can offer professional training to foreign university professors; these professors can directly experience Korean professors' real-time online lectures while managing their own E-School lectures. Because of this exposure, foreign professors can receive indirect training in Korean Studies. Securing the expertise of foreign university professors is important because it can strengthen the expertise in Korean Studies courses.

**Table 5.** Learners' satisfaction with lecture operations

Items		Not satisfied at all (1 pt)	Not satisfied (2 pts)	Satisfied (3 pts)	Very satisfied (4 pts)	Total	Average satisfaction (Max 4 pts)
Satisfaction with lecture transmission	Effectiveness of real-time online courses	0 (0%)	6 (8.2%)	26 (35.6%)	41 (56.2%)	73 (100%)	3.5
	Satisfaction with technology	2 (2.7%)	3 (4.1%)	36 (49.3%)	32 (43.8%)	73 (100%)	3.3
Communication and interaction	Interaction with professor	0 (0%)	4 (5.5%)	29 (39.7%)	40 (54.8%)	73 (100%)	3.5

Fourth, the courses can establish a network between Korean and foreign universities to expand the possibility of professional exchange. This means that the contents of Korean Studies can be more diverse and specialized through mutual exchange between Korean and overseas universities. In addition to specialization in Korea, it can be reborn as a global discipline following the globalization trend.

**CONCLUSION**

There is demand from universities abroad for Korean Studies courses, in addition to the language, on subjects such as Korean politics, economy, society and culture. Nevertheless, it is difficult to host many thematic courses abroad because there are few available specialist lecturers. To solve this problem, information and communication technology can be utilized. However, existing online lectures have limitations with unilateral communication; to solve this problem, real-time online courses are alternatives, although it is still necessary to assess their effectiveness.

To achieve this purpose, we conducted a survey on satisfaction with an E-School program. We surveyed 97 professors and learners who participated in the program by establishing two research theses: to assess learners' and professors' satisfaction with (1) real-time online contents and (2) lecture operation. Our analysis shows that both professors and learners had generally high satisfaction with both the contents and operation of the

real-time online courses. This suggests that these courses could have a positive effect on the development of Korean Language and Korean Studies abroad. Furthermore, it could also contribute to the specialization and academic development of overseas Korean Studies lectures and deepening of academic interest in Korean culture, culture and society beyond the Korean Wave. However, it is necessary to improve the learners' satisfaction by enhancing ways for professors and learners to interact in the online courses. In addition, given technological difficulties observed, there is need for improvements and solutions to problems such as camera failures and problems with other multimedia execution and the lack of high-priced equipment such as echo cancellers.

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