Virtual classroom management solutions for COVID-19 related anxiety issues

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought immeasurable changes in almost every aspect of our lives and education is no exception. Following social distancing policies, the vast majority of educational institutions across the globe have shifted their academic structure from traditional face-to-face classes to online classes through a video conferencing software ‘Zoom’ as a synchronous method of instructions. Besides the fact that a complete diversion of classes toward online education has brought hope to many students to continue their education amid this time of the pandemic, there are many drawbacks to online learning, including online learning anxiety, that keep many students from achieving their learning goals. This study is designed to investigate Korean university students’ attitude toward online learning in general and their feelings of anxiety (if any) in particular when using video conferencing software ‘Zoom’. This mixed method study was conducted in two universities in Korea. Participants (n=132) were both male (n=61, 46.2%) and female (n=71, 53.8%) undergraduate students enrolled in the English linguistics department. The hypothesis stated that students with different socio-economic backgrounds have different attitudes towards online learning, which affects their feelings of anxiety for online learning. Quantitative data was collected in the form of survey questions, and interviews were conducted with randomly selected students (n=13) to obtain qualitative data. The findings suggest a few pedagogical implications for both teachers and students that include interventions and support by the experts to feel less isolated in online classes, and provision of a more user-friendly platform to be connected with teachers and peers.

Keywords: Korean university students; COVID-19; online learning anxiety; synchronous and video conferencing, Zoom
The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every aspect of human life from business to home life. Among all, education is one of the most affected aspects of daily life that has not only upset students’ daily life but also it has impinged on their parents, teachers, and even the whole education system. Besides the fact that a complete diversion of classes toward online education has brought hope to many students to continue their education amid this time of the pandemic, there are many drawbacks of online learning, including online learning anxiety, that keep many students from achieving their learning goals. For online classes, a large number of educational institutions are using video conferencing software Zoom that facilitates teacher-student interaction in the classroom synchronously. Studies conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic years reported that students across the globe have been seriously affected especially by the social distancing policies to contain the spread of COVID-19. Their torment caused by the pandemic consists of a long list including travel restrictions, physical distancing, isolation, and quarantining, as well as dormitory and border closure (Quacquarelli, 2020).

This study was conducted to analyze Korean university students’ overall attitude toward online learning through the video conferencing software Zoom, a widely used video conferencing platform during the pandemic, and to determine their anxiety specifically when taking online classes through Zoom software. One of the biggest issues related to online classes is the anxiety that students feel in a virtual learning environment. The main reason for this problem is an unplanned implication of online learning when both students and teachers were not ready to use virtual learning platforms (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020). This study is carefully designed to analyze learners’ attitudes and anxiety towards online learning environments in five different categories including gender, age, areas they live, year in university, and the availability of appropriate digital devices to participate in online classes during the Covid-19 crisis. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of this study is to eliminate Korean university English language learners’ anxiety about taking online classes and making the online classes an ideal alternative to face-to-face classes.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Availability of Technology

It is assumed that most Korean students have access to some sort of digital devices including computer, laptop, tablet, etc. In most cases, students in Korea own a digital device, whereas the rest can access these digital devices at their schools or the internet cafes. Kim (2013) stated that almost 98% Korean students have access to digital devices at home, at their schools, or internet cafes. However, during the pandemic, this becomes a serious concern when students attend the offline classes. This means they cannot access the computers at their schools as well, and in most cases, internet cafes are not considered safe places during the pandemic. Under these circumstances, the question of having access to digital devices takes a central place in this study.

Availability of Digital Devices for Virtual Classes

Following the nature of this study, it is very important to discover the access and availability of digital devices that were the center of virtual learning. In a similar study, Beaunoyer, Dupere, & Guitton (2020) performed an experiment to determine the relationship between students’ online learning and their families’ socioeconomic status. A big range of disparities was noticed among learners’ attitude, feelings, and learning outcomes. It was noticed that students from low-income families and those living in remote areas are more likely to feel anxiety during virtual classes. A significantly strong relationship is also found between socioeconomic status and learners’ anxiety level (Jiang, 2020). This anxiety could be triggered by the lack of personal digital devices, outdated digital devices, lack of personal space at home to take online classes, lack of personal room or desk at home, etc. (Yen, 2020). Richard & Anthony (2019) referred to a report published by Pew Research Center, stating that a large number of students belong to low socioeconomic families. Lack of access to modern digital equipment and digital inequalities are the main reasons why students from lower-income families perform poorly and thus get stressed and feel anxiety (Adam, Kaye, & Haßler, 2020).

Importance of Socio-Economic Factor in Virtual Learning

Jæger & Blaabæk (2020) reported in a recent study that learners’ families and their socio-economic background also affect students on their opportunities to access and benefit from virtual learning. The study suggested that the students’ with comparatively low-income families faced difficulties in accessing the up-to-date equipment that could help them with better class participation.) conducted a study on digital disparities during the Covid-19 pandemic and reported that the biggest challenge for most students was to avail themselves of the latest equipment and better internet connectivity. This new educational culture of virtual learning amid the pandemic raises an extremely important
question for educational experts and policy makers that how this new trend of virtual learning could benefit those living in remote areas and belonging to lower-income families. Pew Research Center published a report on the relationship between students’ academic performance and their socio-economic status (Richard & Anthony, 2019).

**Learners’ Preparedness for Online Classes**

The biggest challenge in the implementation of virtual classes is the lack of readiness knowledge which causes severe anxiety among students. Cook (2009) conducted an internet-based meta-analysis that was designed to analyze learners’ preferences between virtual classes and conventional classes. The findings suggested that there is no evidence that virtual learning has any significant advantage for learners over conventional learning. In a study conducted on learners’ anxiety in online classes, Cao et al., (2020) surveyed 7143 university students. They examined that 25% participants were suffering from emotional breakdown under pressure. In another study, Lee (2020) examined that nearly 83% students faced anxiety and mental stress during virtual classes, and 26% among them mentioned that they have not been provided support for their mental health.

**Types of Obstacles to Virtual Learning**

Balticulon et al., (2020) introduced a list of five major types of obstacles to virtual learning classes including technological obstacles, personal obstacles, families obstacles, institutional obstacles, and community obstacles. They conducted a study and found out that only 41% of students considered themselves to be mentally and physically ready to participate in virtual classes. Among the above mentioned 5 obstacles, technological obstruction was the biggest cause of students’ anxiety. Their physical condition, including laziness, and inability to go to school and interact with classmates were considered the second biggest reason for their anxiety. Disruption from the family members, including siblings and other distractions at home (e.g. television noise), was also believed to be another big obstacle for students that hindered their ability to successfully participate in the virtual classes (Balticulon et al., 2020). In a study conducted on students’ virtual learning attitude during the Covid-19 pandemic, Sintema (2020) reported that students’ biggest fear is that they might drop their class percentage this year.

**Online Teaching - A Replacement for Real Classes**

Amid this extreme time of uncertainty, virtual education has provided an alternative for both students and teachers to continue their education. This online mode of pedagogy has made virtual learning the panacea in this crisis of Covid-19. Most institutions which were reluctant to accept virtual learning early on, are now adopting an online learning environment (Yen, 2020). Besides lots of
changes that Covid-19 brought into our world, one of the byproducts of the pandemic is revolutionizing education and introducing virtual learning on a broad scale. Students can continue their education virtually from any part of the world through online classes. A vast number of education institutions from early education to university level educational institutions have already adopted online learning interfaces (Liguori & Winkler, 2020).

Problems Associated with Online Teaching and Learning

Besides lots of benefits that internet-based education environments provide to both students and teachers, there is a long list of drawbacks that come along with the benefits of online education. These difficulties include downloading errors, concerns with installation of new programs or applications, login issues, audio or video problems, and so on. Sometimes students find online classes ineffective, boring, and distracting (Martin, 2020). They find it challenging to concentrate on classes through the internet because of many distractions including messages, emails, different websites, notifications, etc., students also find it difficult to interact with their peers for getting their feedback or comments on their work. In some cases, students feel it is more teacher-centered if the teachers lecture and students have to only listen (Martin, 2020). Technical difficulties including internet connectivity, wifi speed, disconnection, etc could also hinder their learning process in an online environment. In addition, students’ preparation to participate in an online course is an important factor to be considered since not many students in this pandemic are trained to participate in online classes (Parkes et al., 2014).

Language Learning Anxiety

When talking about learning a foreign language, anxiety takes a central place which affects learners’ attitude and performance. Anxiety is associated with an emotional state of mind when feeling uncertain and uneasy (Na, 2007). Liu (2006) pointed out three main areas of anxiety related research including state anxiety, trait anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. State anxiety is related to the state of mind which fluctuates rapidly from time to time, whereas trait anxiety is a form of anxiety when the emotions do not easily change and remain stable. Situation-specific anxiety is a type of anxiety that is most related to foreign language learning. This anxiety triggers a negative emotional reaction in learners when learning a foreign language (Horwitz, 2010). Situation-specific anxiety was further subdivided into three categories including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension is a type of anxiety that occurs when learners feel fear that something might happen in communication with peers or teachers. Under this type of anxiety students feel a constant fear of the classroom in general and their interaction with their peers and teachers in particular. Fear of negative evaluation is related to learners’ fear each time their classroom performance is evaluated. Their performance includes
homework, assignments, projects, classwork, etc. And, test anxiety worries learners when they are asked to take tests. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is considered a standard scale to test classroom anxiety (See Appendix B). Horwitz (2010) categorized the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale results into three levels. Higher score in the FLCAS determines a higher level of anxiety. Pichette (2009) stated that different types of language learning anxieties affect learners in different ways.

Alleviating Learners’ Language Learning Anxiety

One of the biggest challenges that most language learners face is the feelings of anxiety when learning a language. Some students cope with the language learning anxiety easily however, most students suffer from it till they gain confidence and develop their own techniques (Payne, 2020). Russell & Murphy- Judy (2020) outlined several techniques based on the research to help alleviate anxiety in the language classroom. It is useful to examine pedagogical implications from classroom-based studies. Getting a good knowledge about the technology the learners need to use and a consistent use of the same technology can alleviate learners’ anxiety and provide them more confidence in their language learning practices (Russell & Murphy- Judy, 2020). A few ways that the instructors may use to help learners reduce their feelings of anxiety include (a) providing learners’ chances to talk to the instructors, (b) giving as much as constructive feedback, (c) complementing their work as much as possible, and (d) introducing fun and use friendly activities in virtual classes (Russell & Murphy- Judy, 2020).

Hypothesis

Based on the literature review, these are some hypotheses of this study that reflect the survey questions.

1) Many online language learners face disruption in classes because of poor internet connectivity.
2) Many online language learners’ study environments are not adequate to facilitate an ideal learning environment (chair, desk, room, etc)
3) Many students find it difficult to concentrate on their online classes because of the loud and distracting environment at home.
4) Students think that Zoom-based classes are better than pre-recorded video lectures because they can interact with their peers and teachers.
5) Most students feel anxiety in front of the camera because of the hesitation to show their appearance to everyone in class.
6) Most students enjoy interacting with their classmates through Zoom during online classes.
7) Most students perform the group work better in Zoom classes than in offline classes.
8) Students feel more comfortable asking questions in online classes than in offline classes.
9) Because of the convenience of taking online classes at home, most students like online classes more than offline ones.
10) Most students prefer offline exams to online ones.
11) Most students consider teachers’ feedback in online classes through Zoom to be more effective than in offline ones.
12) Because of the opportunities to interact with peers, most students enjoy classes taught by foreign professors more than those of Korean professors.
13) Most students consider Zoom classes helpful to concentrating better at studies than offline classes because they can take classes at home without any disruptions.

METHODS

During the Covid-19 pandemic, students were required to take virtual classes, mainly through Zoom. Since there was no specific training for both the students and the teachers, it was believed that many students and even teachers might have found it quite challenging to adjust with the virtual classroom environment where they have to be present in front of the camera in order to participate in the virtual classroom. This research was conducted by a team of three foreign language professors at a Korean university. The data was collected in the form of a survey and an online interview during the fall 2020 semester. The survey was conducted through Google Forms and was sent to the students as a link. They completed the survey and returned it to their respective professors online. Among the 132 participants, 53.8% were female students and 46.2% participants were male.

Subjects

This experiment was conducted on the students of two different universities in South Korea. Participants were freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors enrolled mainly in humanities and social sciences subjects. 62.1% of the subjects were freshmen, 22% sophomores, 13.6% juniors and 4% were seniors. 53.8% of the participants were female and 46.2% were male university students. All the participants were born between 1994 and 2002. Among those, 36.4% (48 participants) were the biggest group who were born in 2001, followed by 31.8% (42 participants) born in 2000. The third biggest age group was 15.2% (20 participants) born in 1998. The fourth biggest age group was 6.8% (9 participants) born in 1997. The fifth biggest age group was 3% each (4 participants) born in 1999 and 2002. The sixth biggest age group was 2.3% (3 participants) born in 1995. And the smallest age group was 0.8% (1 participant) born in 1994.

Randomly Selected Participants
Data in this research was conducted through surveys and interviews. As mentioned above, as a part of quantitative data, a survey questionnaire was given to the whole class each time and was told that it was voluntary. As it was conducted online through Google Forms, students had an absolute choice whether to complete it or not. The other source of data was collected in the form of interview questions to strengthen the evidence qualitatively. Students from three classes were requested to volunteer in this 10-minute interview. They were told that this will be an anonymous interview and their identity will not be revealed. Thirteen students volunteered to participate in the interview.

The Sample

The survey was given to 150 students, however, 132 students completed and returned the survey. As it is already mentioned, the survey was conducted through Google Forms and was sent to them as a link. They completed the survey and returned online. Among 132 participants, 53% were female students and 46.2% participants were male students. In addition to the data collected through questionnaire, 13 randomly selected subjects participated in a 10 minutes long interview. This interview consisted of questions that infer detailed responses regarding their feelings on the survey questions. Five interview questions were shortlisted that were the extensions of the survey questions.

Ethical Considerations

In order to meet the criteria of ethical considerations, participation in the survey and the interviews was voluntary. The first line on the survey sheet stated that the participation is voluntary. Following the nature of subjects, the volunteering statement was provided in both English and Korean. The same was mentioned before conducting the interviews with randomly selected subjects. It was also stated that the survey and interviews will be anonymous. It was also ensured that the access to the data collected will be restricted to the researchers who are conducting the experiment.

Validity and Reliability

In order to obtain a representative sample and respond to the issue of validity and reliability, a questionnaire, composed of five demographic questions in section A, and thirteen target questions in section B, was given to 154 students in total. However, 132 students filled out the questionnaire. Following the nature of this study, a mixed method approach was used. Survey results helped to identify the general trends and attitudes and were easy to quantify the findings quantitatively. Kim & Seo (2012) advocated that the quantitative method of research offers a thorough understanding and foundation of complex issues. That is why the value of quantitative research has been emphasized in the second language learning research paradigm. Therefore, quantitative research methodology increases the reliability of the corresponding evidence achieved.
through the process (Kim & Seo, 2012). On the other hand, interviews were also conducted with 13 randomly selected subjects to verify the results qualitatively. The interview responses validated the survey findings that helped strengthen the evidence and make the whole data collection process more reliable.

**Instruments and Procedure**

In order to measure learners’ attitude toward online classes, a survey and online interviews were conducted to collect data.

**Survey**

The survey had two parts; the first part was based on participants' basic information, whereas the second part consisted of target questions. In the first part, participants' basic information including their gender, age, area of residence, year in university, and access to digital devices including computers, smartphones, and tablets etc. The second part of the survey included the questions related to learners’ attitudes towards online classes through zoom application. There were thirteen questions that covered a range of topics including the technical problems they faced, a comparison between video recorded lectures and synchronous classes, usefulness of zoom application for effective classroom interaction, effectiveness of zoom application for homework and exams, etc. a total number of 132 participants completed the survey that helped to analyze learners’ attitude especially their language learning classroom anxiety through zoom application quantitatively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey sent to participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants filled the survey online</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey results were analyzed quantitatively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey results were reported</td>
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Figure 1. Flow Chart of Data Collection and Analysis Process

**Interviews**

Each interview was conducted for ten minutes through zoom software. The interview questions helped to elaborate the survey findings qualitatively and provided an insight of learners’ feelings related to their online classroom anxiety. The questions were mainly about the problems Korean university English language learners face during online classes and their feelings of anxiety when taking online classes through zoom. The interview questions were designed to
elicit detailed information regarding learners’ feelings and they were constructed on the basis of survey questions. Each interview question was related to one or more than one survey question in order to discover more about learners’ attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview was conducted with 13 participants</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participants responded 5 interview questions through Zoom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview results were analyzed qualitatively</td>
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<td>Interview results were reported</td>
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Figure 2. Flow Chart of Data Collection and Analysis Process

Data Analysis

The attitudes were analyzed through a five-point Likert Scale with items including, strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. 3 is a neutral value that determines a no specific trend on that certain item.

Table 1. Likert Scale values and their descriptions used for the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
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Factor analysis was performed to bond the questions into groups of different categories. A statistical component analysis (Statview 5.0) was performed to highlight important categories to examine learners’ attitude toward online classes in this pandemic. A method called root curve (Statview 5.0) was used to determine the factors from a list of independent questions. The main feature of the root curve method is that it stops choosing the factors when there is a sharp shift downwards in Eigen-value. After an oblique rotation, each individual item loaded at a value of 0.45 or higher helped to determine each category. In addition, Cronbach’s Alpha using SPSS helped to check
dimensionality of the scale used for factor analysis. The survey questions were categorized in three groups; learners’ general attitude towards online learning, their anxiety when taking online classes through zoom software, and difference between learners’ feeling of classroom interaction through Zoom and in offline classes. In order to compare Cronbach’s Alpha for all three categories questions q1, q2, q3 (q1= attitude towards online learning, q2= Zoom related anxiety, q3= difference between online and offline classroom interaction) the reliability command was used.

Reliability

The alpha coefficient for all below given three variables is 0.839 that suggested that the variables have relatively high internal consistency. It is also important to remember that a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered ‘acceptable’ in most social science research situations. On the other hand, interviews were used to verify the reliability of the results and infer more detailed attitude-based responses.

Warning: NO SCALE subcommand was found. Scaling will be done on all specific variables

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

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<tr>
<th>Case process Summary</th>
<th>N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases Valid</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excluded</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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a=List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure

The alpha coefficient for all above-mentioned three variables is 0.839 that suggested that the variables have relatively high internal consistency. It is also important to remember that a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered ‘acceptable’ in most social science research situations. On the other hand, interviews were used to verify the reliability of the results and infer more detailed attitude-based responses.

FINDINGS

Overview of the Experiment

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been an important issue in academia and for educators to introduce appropriate online learning platforms which not only offer a substitute for offline learning under these circumstances of semi-
lockdown in many countries but also provide effective affordances that help learners for their skills development. As mentioned above, learners’ attitude towards online learning, especially their language learning anxiety was measured through a survey.

Survey Questions 1-3

The first three survey questions were designed to categorize the participants into various subgroups and to eventually allow us to draw conclusions from each subgroup in terms of learners’ experiences.

Survey Question 1

The first survey question was designed to investigate learners’ feelings regarding the technology they used. For online classes, internet connectivity is considered the most important prerequisite that enables learners to participate in online classes.

Survey Question 1. The internet connection is sufficient for my online classes.

Based on the data collected through the survey, participants showed mixed feelings towards their internet connection. 47 (35.6%) participants reported that their internet connection was satisfactory whereas 24 (18.2%) participants showed their high favorability toward the quality of their internet connection for online classes. On the other hand, 40 (30.3%) participants didn’t show any strong response in any direction, agree or disagree. In a bigger picture, it can also be viewed as 84.1% participants do not face any specific discomfort by their internet connections and their online classes do not have any particular negative effect caused by their internet connection. Only 15.9% participants are dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with their internet connection.

Survey Question 2

Second survey question highlighted another important issue of the availability of a proper learning environment for online classes. The study environment included a proper space to take online lectures, availability of other resources including chair, desk, etc.
Survey Question 2. My online study environment is comfortable (e.g., Chair, desk, room)

The second question on the survey inquired about the study environment and the data showed that most students do not face any specific issue in terms of study environment. Among all five items on the Likert scale, 62 (47%) participants showed their satisfaction toward their study environment for online classes. Even 19 (14.4%) participants showed extreme satisfaction toward their study environment. In addition, 39 (29.4%) participants did not show any specific discomfort or comfort regarding their study environment for online classes and they showed a ‘neutral’ attitude. On the other hand, 12 (9.1%) participants seemed to be negative toward their study environment. Nine participants (6.8%) showed their dissatisfaction toward their study environment, whereas 3 (2.3%) participants showed their extreme dissatisfaction toward their study environment.

Survey Question 3

The third survey question is also designed to investigate Korean university students’ perception toward their study environment for online classes, especially the classes they take through Zoom video conferencing software. Based on a thorough view on previous studies, one of the biggest challenges for learners when taking online classes is unavailability of a proper study environment with all the necessary infrastructure (e.g., desk, chair) and a quiet environment to concentrate on lecture well.

Survey Question 3. My online study environment is too loud and distracting
Based on the hypothesis, survey question 3 was designed to examine learners’ feelings toward their study environment in terms of distractions that hamper their learning. Based on the data collected, a total of 77 (58.3%) participants reported that they are satisfied or extremely satisfied with their study environment. Those who seemed to have no particular complaint regarding their learning environment in terms of distraction counted for 32.6%. Only a small percentage of 9.1% participants seemed to have distractions when taking online classes. Students who seemed to be satisfied with their study environment are 40.9% (54 participants). On the other hand, 23 participants (17.4%) reported that they are extremely satisfied with their study environment.

**Survey Questions 4 - 13**

The remainder of the questions were opinion-based questions. The data collected in this section allows us to draw conclusions regarding the scope of impact that certain factors such as internet connection, learning environment and noise all contribute, as well as conclusions that may stand independent of such factors.

**Survey Question 4**

Fourth item on the survey delved into Korean university students’ attitude toward the use of Zoom video conferencing software for online classes. This question asked of their feelings toward Zoom software compared to the pre-recorded video lectures (as the pre-recorded lecture videos were used as a form of instructions in the spring semester when the Covid19 social distancing restrictions were imposed).

Survey Question 4. Zoom classes are better than recorded video lectures.

Data for survey question four showed that only 14.3% of respondents preferred Zoom classes by picking the ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ option on the five point likert scale. On the other hand, 62.2% of respondents preferred pre-recorded video lectures over zoom classes. By having a closer look at the pie chart, the data showed that 41 respondents (31.1%) considered pre-recorded video lectures extremely helpful for them, whereas 41 respondents (31.1%) considered pre-recorded video lectures helpful for them in an online class setting. A considerable number of respondents (23.5%) stayed neutral by not showing
any specific trend toward either zoom classes or pre-recorded video lectures. A comparatively small percentage of respondents (9.8%) considered zoom classes helpful for online lectures compared to pre-recorded lectures. And only 4.5% of respondents considered zoom classes extremely helpful. Neglecting the mean value (neutral) on the Likert scale, which is 23.5%, a decisive number of 62.2% respondents (82 participants) seemed to be in favor of pre-recorded video lectures for online classes.

**Survey Question 5**

Fifth item on the survey is one of the central points of this study. As it has been stated earlier that a vast majority of educational institutions around the world has shifted their education from a traditional means of face to face classes to online classes due to the social distancing protocols during the Covid19 pandemic.

*Survey Question 5. I feel more anxiety in front of a camera than in offline classes.*

![Survey Question 5. I feel more anxiety in front of a camera than in offline classes.](image)

The results for question 5 showed that 34.9% of respondents (46 participants) picked the options ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ on the likert scale. That can be interpreted as they do not feel anxiety by taking online classes with their cameras on. On the other hand, a comparatively similar proportion of respondents (36.4%) picked the options ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ on the likert scale. That means they feel anxiety when taking online classes with their cameras on. Having a closer look at the results for the survey question 5, it seems like the participants are divided into three significantly similar proportion groups including: (a) those (36.4%) who don’t like to show their appearance through camera in online classes, (b) those (34.9%) who are don’t mind taking online classes with their cameras on, (c) and those (28.8%) who are neutral and did not show any trend for whether to turn their cameras on for their online classes or not.

**Survey Question 6**

The sixth item on the survey directed toward one of the most important elements of language learning context.
Survey Question 6. I can interact with my classmates better through Zoom classes than in offline classes.

The results showed that 65.9% participants didn’t favor the classroom interaction through Zoom video conferencing software compared and seemed to prefer interaction in face-to-face classes. Having a closer look at data showed that a tiny percentage of 8.3% Participants seemed to consider Zoom video conferencing software helpful for peer interaction. In addition, a considerable number of 34 participants (25.8%) didn’t show any trend by picking the option ‘neutral’ on the likert scale. By viewing this data in detail, a substantial percentage of respondents 31.1% and 34.8% (41 and 46 participants) picked the option ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ accordingly. Conversely, a considerably lower percentage of participants 3% and 5.3% (4 and 7 subjects) picked the option of ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ accordingly. This showed that students consider face-to-face class interaction more useful than online classes interaction through Zoom video conferencing software.

Survey Question 7

Seventh item on the survey is designed for determining Korean students’ feelings toward group work in class.

Survey Question 7. Group work is more efficient in Zoom classes.

The result showed that only 18.1% respondents (24 participants) thought that the group work is efficient in Zoom classes. Among them, 4.5% respondents...
(6 participants) picked ‘strongly agree’ and 13.6% respondents (18 participants) picked ‘agree’. On the other hand, 22% respondents (29 participants) picked ‘strongly disagree’ and 33.3% respondents (44 participants) picked ‘agree’. A comparatively large number of (26.5%) participants chose to stay ‘neutral’ and did not show any specific trend.

**Survey Question 8**

As a part of one of the most important components of language learning classes, survey question 8 also investigated a slightly different but interesting element of classroom interaction.

**Survey Question 8. I am more comfortable asking questions in front of the whole class on Zoom than in offline classes.**

Data showed that a considerable number of 45.5% respondents (60 participants) thought that asking questions in front of the whole class is easier in face-to-face offline classes than in Zoom classes. Interestingly, a vast majority of respondents (37.1%) showed no specific choice and picked the option ‘neutral’. This could mean that asking questions in front of the whole class in zoom setting or in face-to-face classes is not very different from each other. Notwithstanding, a small percentage of respondents (17.4%) reported that they are comfortable asking questions in Zoom classes. Among them, 5.3% respondents picked ‘strongly agree’ and 12.1% respondents picked ‘agree’.

**Survey Question 9**

Question 9 on the survey accounted for a bigger concept of online learning compared to offline learning. This question examined a prototypical area of language learning; online learning vs. offline learning. Data showed that a significant proportion of respondents (30.3%) chose the option ‘neutral’. That means they have no specific preference for the classes; online or offline. A total of 27.3% respondents (36 participants) showed interest in taking online classes. Among them, 7.6% respondents chose ‘strongly agree’ and 19.7% chose ‘agree’ on the five-point Likert scale survey. A significant proportion of 42.4% respondents showed their interest in face-to-face offline classes. Among them,
17.4% respondents chose ‘strongly disagree’ and 25% chose ‘disagree’ for question 9 on the survey.

Survey Question 9. I prefer online classes to offline classes.

Survey Question 10

The survey question 10 is related to assessment.

Survey Question 10. I prefer offline exams over online exams.

The data showed that 21.2% participants chose the ‘strongly disagree’ option and 25% participants chose the ‘disagree’ option. This can be interpreted as 46.2% participants prefer taking online exams. However, a considerable number of 26.5% participants chose the option ‘neutral’ on the Likert scale for question 10. That means they do not have any specific choice on the exam format. On the other hand, 12.9% participants chose the option ‘strongly agree’ and 14.4% participants chose the option ‘agree’. This data reveals that 27.3% participants are in favor of taking offline exams.

Survey Question 11

Question 11 on the survey is connected to the prototype idea of interaction in language learning.
Survey Question 11. I prefer teacher’s feedback through Zoom over in a face-to-face class.

The data suggested that students’ think teachers’ feedback is more effective in a face-to-face class. By having a closer look at the data, it can be viewed that out of a total of 47% participants, who seemed to consider teachers’ feedback in face-to-face classes more effective, 12.9% participants chose the option ‘strongly disagree’ and 34.1% participants chose the option ‘disagree’. On the other hand, among those who thought teachers’ feedback was more effective in online classes (12.1% participants) through Zoom application, 3.8% participants (5 students) chose the option ‘strongly agree’ and 8.3% responders (11 participants) chose the option ‘agree’.

Survey Question 12

This question is designed specifically by using the words ‘Korean professors’ and ‘foreign professors’ to make it simplified for participants to understand and respond accordingly.

Survey Question 12. In a zoom environment, I feel more anxiety in Korean professors’ classes than in foreign professors’ classes.

The data revealed that a majority of participants (56.1% students) reported they don’t feel anxiety in Korean professors’ classes. Among them, 20.5% participants chose the option ‘strongly disagree’ and 35.6% participants chose the option ‘disagree’. Once again, a considerable number of participants chose the option ‘neutral’. This showed that they do not feel any particular anxiety in
online classes; either a foreign professor’s class or a Korean professor’s class. On the other hand, a relatively small number of participants (14.4% students) reported that they felt more anxiety in Korean professor’s classes than foreign professor’s classes. Among them, 6.1% participants chose the option ‘strongly agree’ and 8.3% participants chose the option ‘agree’.

Survey Question 13

Final item on the survey is related to the software most students used for their online classes during the pandemic.

Survey Question 13. Zoom classes help me focus better at my studies than in offline classes.

The data showed that a vast majority of participants (53.8% students) did not think that they could focus better on their studies through Zoom classes. Among them, 21.2% participants chose the option ‘strongly disagree’ and 32.6% participants chose the option ‘disagree’. Once again, a significant number of participants chose the option ‘neutral’. That can be interpreted as these participants did not consider any relationship between the usefulness of Zoom classes or offline classes in terms of focusing better. On the other hand, a small percentage of participants (10.6% participants) considered that Zoom classes were helpful to focus on studies better. Among them, 3.8% participants chose the option ‘strongly agree’, and 6.8% participants chose ‘agree’.

Reporting Interview Data: Qualitative Analysis

As a part of a mixed method study, both quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data were used. For quantitative data, a survey was given to participants; for qualitative data, on the other hand, interviews were conducted with randomly selected participants.

Interview Question 1

The first interview question was: Which types of classes provide better opportunities for interaction between peers; online zoom classes or offline classes, and
why? This question is related to the survey question 6 and 7 that infer learners’ feelings about classroom participation and interaction with their peers through Zoom classes. The interview results for this question support the survey question 6 and 7 results. The interview data helped to dig deeper into the problem and suggested a few reasons why learners do not feel comfortable interacting with their peers in Zoom-based classes. The list of limitations that learners thought Zoom platform has is given below:

Student 1: ‘My internet connection is not stable and sometimes my zoom video froze. That made me nervous and worried when I had a chance to interact with my peers.’

Student 2: ‘Each time I speak with my peers, my face is highlighted on my peers’ screen that makes me nervous. So, I avoid participating in group work freely.’

Student 3: ‘Sometimes it is difficult for me to understand what my peers are saying because of my unstable internet connection. That keeps me from participating in group work and interacting with peers.’

Student 4: ‘On my turn when I speak, my voice can be too loud and that can be annoying for others.’

Student 5: ‘Most of the group work and peer interactions happen in breakout rooms. However, the teacher is not available there, so some students do not talk and just stay quiet.’

**Interview Question 2**

The second interview question was: **How do you feel when you take online classes with your camera on?** This question is related to question 5 on the survey that inquired about learners’ feeling of anxiety because of the camera. The survey question 5 data showed that 36.4% participants reported anxiety in front of the camera; however, 34.9% reported that they do not feel anxiety in front of cameras. In addition, a comparatively similar number of participants did not show any trend. When a related question in a face-to-face interview was asked to inquire about their appearance in front of the camera, interviewees had different responses. Six interviewees among thirteen told that they did not feel any hesitation showing their appearance in front of the camera. However, others had different reasons why they felt anxiety in front of cameras. A list of reasons why the participants felt anxiety is given below.

Student 1: ‘Sometimes, I take lectures without wearing makeup that makes me feel anxious when turning on my camera.’

Student 2: ‘When the camera is on, others can see in the background and my messy house makes me feel embarrassed.’

Student 3: ‘I am worried about cyber security and not sure if my privacy will be protected. That is why I do not feel comfortable showing my face on camera.’
Student 4: ‘When my camera is on, my computer speed gets slower; this makes me miss out on some of the class contents. Therefore I do not feel comfortable turning on my camera.’

**Interview Question 3**

The third interview question was: Which mode of classes do you think was better, Zoom classes or pre-recorded videos, and why? This question investigated learners’ choice and the reason for their choice between zoom classes and video-recorded classes. This question was related to question number 4 on the survey. The results for survey question 4 stated that 62.2% participants disagreed with the usefulness of zoom based classes over pre-recorded videos. Only 14.3% participants agreed that zoom classes were better. And 23.5% participants did not show any specific choice. In order to investigate the reasons why learners preferred pre-recorded videos, interview question 3 helped to find out why learners preferred pre-recorded videos. A list of common responses from the interviewees are listed below:

Student 1: ‘Some students take many classes; therefore, it is sometimes challenging to participate in all synchronous classes. For pre-recorded videos, they have an opportunity to watch in their free time.

Student 2: ‘Synchronous classes through Zoom application are not easy whereas pre-recorded videos are easy to watch and do the homework.’

Student 3: ‘Zoom classes require students to be attentive all the time, whereas pre-recorded videos do not require to be so attentive.’

Student 4: ‘For pre-recorded videos, students do not feel that they have to watch all the videos. They just watch the highlights of the video lecture, whereas the Zoom classes require them to respond and participate in class.’

Student 5: ‘Pre-recorded videos are easy to take because students do not need to be fully ready for class; they can watch lecture videos in their beds too. However, for Zoom classes, they have to be fully ready, both physically and mentally.’

**Interview Question 4**

The fourth interview question was: Which classes do you think were easier, Korean professors’ classes or foreign professors’ classes, and why? This question was related to question number 12 and 5 on the survey that attempted to determine participants’ feelings of anxiety in their native language classes or foreign language classes. Similar to question 5, this question attempted to explore learners’ anxiety in Zoom based online classes where the medium of instruction is their native language compared to ‘English’, the foreign language they are
learning. The interview participants described various reasons why they considered Korean professors’ classes earlier. Most common responses are listed below:

Student 1: ‘Korean professors mainly lecture and students do not have to get ready to answer their questions from time to time as in foreign professors’ classes.’

Student 2: ‘In foreign professors’ classes we have to pay more attention to understand because the language they use is English where in Korean professors’ classes, we easily understand the contents.’

Student 3: ‘Sometimes the voice is not clear because of the poor internet connection. Therefore it makes it even more difficult for students to understand in foreign professors’ classes than in Korean professors’ classes.’

Student 4: ‘Foreign professors’ classes are sometimes intimidating when teachers’ call out for some students and they have to respond in front of the whole class in a foreign language.’

Student 5: ‘Foreign professors’ classes are more engaging and fun and students feel very active, whereas Korean professors’ classes have a lot of information and they are generally not engaging. We have to only listen passively.’

**Interview Question 5**

The fifth interview question was: What weaknesses do you see in Zoom classes compared to offline classes? This question investigated learners’ feelings and attitude towards using Zoom video conferencing software for their online classes. This question inferred their detailed responses on survey question number eleven and thirteen. As online learning has been one of the mainstream topics among many linguists, lots of video conferencing platforms (including Zoom) for online classes have been introduced in the past decade. In order to dig deeper and elicit more detailed responses, interview question 5 was asked to the interviewees. Most commonly told responses are outlined below:

Response 1: ‘In online classes, the internet connection is not reliable. The speed of the internet connection varies from time to time. That makes it difficult for students to focus better at what the teacher is saying if there is some disruption in voice.’

Response 2: ‘Students’ take face-to-face classes more seriously than the online classes because they know that they will be asked a question and if they have any questions, they can easily ask the teacher. But in online classes, students feel hesitant to ask questions.’

Response 3: ‘In online classes, there are so many distractions that keep them focusing on the class fully. These distractions include playing games, chatting with friends, browning the internet, etc.’

Response 4: ‘Getting teachers’ feedback is not easy in online classes because some students think they might be wasting the whole class time if they ask for some feedback.’
Response 5: ‘Constantly looking at the monitor for taking online classes makes students feel tired. And it is a bit challenging for them to participate actively for a long time in a class that is longer than one hour, whereas they can stay focused for a longer period of time in face-to-face classes.’

**DISCUSSION**

This section provides a comparison between the results of this study and the existing literature. A vast number of education institutions from early education to university level educational institutions have already adopted online learning interfaces (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). Amid this rapid shift from traditional means of education to online learning, many experts are worried about the quality of online education.

Table 2. A simplified form of survey results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Agree - 1 (%)</th>
<th>Neutral - 2 (%)</th>
<th>Disagree - 3 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The internet connection is sufficient for my online classes</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My online study environment is comfortable (Chair desk room)</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>My online study environment is too loud and distracting</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Zoom classes are better than recorded video lectures</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I feel more anxiety in front of a camera than in offline classes</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I can interact with my classmates better through zoom classes than in offline classes.</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Group work is more efficient in zoom classes</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I am more comfortable asking questions in front of the whole class on Zoom than in offline classes.</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I prefer online classes to offline classes.</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I prefer offline exams over online exams.</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I prefer teacher’s feedback through zoom over in a face to face class.</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>In a Zoom environment, I feel more anxiety in Korean professors’ classes than in foreign professors’ classes.</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Zoom classes help me focus better at my studies than in offline classes.</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion: Survey Questions 1, 2, & 3

As discussed above, survey questions 1, 2, and 3 are designed to collect the basic demographic information regarding learners’ internet connectivity, their study space at home, and their study environment either loud and distracting or not.

Table 3. Data for survey questions 1, 2, and 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>58.3%</td>
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<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results showed that a majority of learners are satisfied with their online learning environment in general. Jæger and Blaabæk (2020) reported in a recent study that learners’ families and their socio-economic background also affect students on their opportunities to access and benefit from virtual learning. The study suggested that the students’ with comparatively low income families faced difficulties in accessing the up-to-date equipment that could help them with better class participation. However, comparing the results of the current study to that of Jæger and Blaabæk’s (2020), it is revealed that the effect of socio-economic background is not the center point in Korean higher education context.

Discussion: Survey Questions 4 & 9

The question 4 on the survey attempted to determine participants’ choice between video-recorded lectures and Zoom based classes. The table below showed that most participants prefer video-recorded lectures.

Table 4. Survey question 4 easy to read results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Zoom classes are better than recorded video lectures.</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I prefer online classes to offline classes.</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Russell and Murphy-Judy (2020) stated that virtual learning culture is a hope for students to continue their education in the middle of the pandemic; it is also a reality that the education system in general and the educators in particular
are not trained for this situation and most education programs are not designed to train teachers for online language pedagogy. When drawing a comparison between the current study and the existing literature, a correlation can be seen.

Discussion: Survey Question 10 & 11

Question 10 and 11 were set to determine Korean university students’ attitude towards one of the most important language learning components ‘assessment’.

Table 5. Survey questions 10 & 11 easy to read results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Agree - 1</th>
<th>Neutral - 2</th>
<th>Disagree - 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I prefer offline exams over online exams.</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I prefer teacher’s feedback through zoom over in a face to face class.</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to take a thorough look at the participants’ attitude toward the assessment, the data is analyzed further to see some variation when making comparisons between female and male students. The below given pie charts present a better look at participants’ attitude toward assessment in relation to gender. Hasan (2020) conducted a study on university students’ attitude toward online learning and revealed that students’ feelings toward feedback from teachers in online classes was not as satisfactory as for offline classes.

Discussion: Survey Question 12

Question 12 on the survey is related to learners’ anxiety. This question analyzes learners’ anxiety when taking a foreign professor’s online class vs. a Korean professor’s online class.

Table 6. Survey question 12 easy to read results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Agree - 1</th>
<th>Neutral - 2</th>
<th>Disagree - 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>In a zoom environment, I feel more anxiety in Korean professors’ classes than in foreign professors’ classes.</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results showed that 56.1% of the participants feel anxiety in online classes that are taught by foreign professors, whereas only a small percentage of the participants (14.1%) feel anxiety in a Korean professor’s online classes. Kim and Seo (2012) emphasized that learners sometimes feel anxiety in foreign language classes. Russell and Murphy-Judy (2020) also stated that foreign language classes can be intimidating because of linguistic and social factors.
including learners’ poor linguistic ability, peer pressure, pressure to contribute when doing group work, fear of being judged, etc.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions & Recommendations

The conclusions reached upon the completion of this study are listed below:

1. Students, in general, are not fully prepared to take online classes and feel some burden when they participate. In order to help them integrate into the online learning environment, training is required for both students and teachers.
2. Most students feel anxiety when they take classes using the Zoom software with their cameras on. It could help if they are informed in advance of the classes that require their appearance on camera.
3. Korean students think that online classes taught by foreign professors are more challenging than those by Korean professors. Foreign professors may need to create more interactive and interesting classes that engage students more and reduce their affective filter.
4. Some students feel anxiety in an online learning environment. The institution or the instructors may need to determine a way to be able to help those who feel stressed in an online learning environment. Regular counseling sessions or some confidence building seminars could be held to provide support to those students who are in need of urgent help.
5. It is indeed our expectation that the framework we have laid out in this study will provide a deeper understanding of the language learning attitude of students in online classes.
6. Instructors have to be extra cautious when designing activities that require students to participate in group activities such as breakout rooms. As it has been observed that most students consider breakout room interaction difficult and ineffective when the teacher is not present because of either not being fully adept at using the Zoom platform or being timid to initiate activity on their own.

Limitations

Following the nature of this study, a number of limitations are associated with the design, data collection, and the sample size of this study. First, the sample size was comparatively small (n=132) and could have provided a better interpretation of the results if the sample size was bigger. The duration of the experiment was short and the fields were limited. The results could have been a bit different if the experiment was conducted for at least one whole semester with
a pre-experiment survey in the beginning of the semester and post experiment survey at the end of the semester. In the results and discussion section, the comparisons mainly focused on the role of gender in order to analyze learners’ attitude toward online classes. If the comparisons were made using different variables including year in the university, students’ age, areas they are living in, and the availability of digital devices, the results could have been different. The interview that was conducted with randomly selected participants could have more questions instead of only five questions. It seemed that the interviews (n=13) helped the researchers a lot to support the survey data. In addition, a comparatively larger sample size for interviews could have provided a better understanding of the results. Another limitation of this study was the inconsistency in the design of the study. Many students were exposed to multiple online learning environments; therefore, it may be more useful to have surveyed students who utilized Zoom exclusively.

REFERENCES


Authors’ Brief CV

**Bilal Qureshi** has been teaching at Seokyeong University since 2012 as a professor in the Global Business Languages department. He is interested in the use of multimedia in language learning and has published multiple research articles in the field. He is the author of the book series Progressive Debate 1, 2, and 3.
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