

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Korean College Students' Attitudes Toward General English Program and Influencing Factors

Misook Kim
Kyung Hee University

한국 대학생들의 교양영어 프로그램에 대한 태도 및 영향 요인 탐색

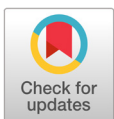
김미숙
경희대학교

*Corresponding Author: michellems@khu.ac.kr

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is two-fold; it is to explore student attitudes toward the general college English program, and second, it is to examine factors that affect student attitudes. A total of 385 students (217 from the basic level, 157 from the intermediate level, and 11 from the advanced level) who took the required general English course partook in the study. They were asked to complete a questionnaire. To analyze the data, *t*-tests and correlation were performed. The results showed that both groups of students held a positive attitude toward the general English program. They reported that they gained confidence in English and showed relatively high satisfaction with the program. In addition, both groups showed agreement that University English (UE) must be mandatory, and the number of required English courses must increase from the current state. Furthermore, over half of the intermediate-level students reported that face-to-face instruction is the most effective mode for language learning because it provides direct communication and interaction with instructors and peers. However, the number of basic-level students who held this opinion was much lower. The findings also showed that student perceptions were related to student nationality but not to student gender and English proficiency. The findings imply that distance learning seems to have paved the way for institutions to implement a blended learning approach that maximizes student learning by taking advantage of distance and face-to-face learning.

Key words: General English course, attitude, distance learning, graded readers



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Introduction

The English language, referred to as world English (Brutt-Griffler, 2002), global English (Crystal, 1997), and a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2007; O’Keeffe et al., 2007), is used in communication in education, business, international trade, and commerce across the globe. Thus competency in English has become more desirable than ever with the fast-paced changes brought about by globalization and technological advancements. In addition, the role of English has been gaining increasing prominence by universities to enhance their global competitiveness by helping their students meet the international community’s demands to compete with their peers from around the world. Hunter et al. (2006) observe that one must be equipped with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be globally competent by stating, “A globally competent person must be able to identify cultural differences to compete globally, collaborate across cultures, and effectively participate in both social and business settings in other countries.” (p. 283). It is argued that many higher educational institutions in the Expanding Circle countries where English is taught and spoken as a foreign language not only offer general English courses as a graduation requirement but also have created additional English courses such as English as specific purposes (ESP) courses and English-medium instruction courses to help students meet global demands (Arik & Arik, 2014; Doiz et al., 2011; Park, 2021).

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, the college where the researcher is employed has had to have transformed the mode of instruction from traditional to distance learning, which means that all courses except a few that needed lab work were conducted in two online modalities, synchronously and asynchronously for the last three semesters consecutively. This has intrigued teachers, researchers, and educational practitioners to scrutinize the effectiveness of online learning and teaching, including English language teaching in Korea. Research has shown both positive and negative findings of distance learning, which many schools had to implement as an emergency response. One congruent finding from much research was that online instruction deprives interaction between teachers and students and between students and their peers (Lee & Kim, 2020; Lim, 2021; Kim, 2020; Moorhouse, 2021). It is believed that this finding is more detrimental to English learning and teaching, which undoubtedly necessitates communication and interactions in the classroom to enhance language learning. This study thus attempts to examine college students’ beliefs and attitudes toward the general English language program they were studying online and factors that affect student attitudes by exploring the following research questions.

What are the beliefs and attitudes of students with different levels of English proficiency toward the general English program?

What is the relationship between students’ beliefs and attitudes and three variables, student nationality, gender, and English level?

Literature Review

The use of the English language in every aspect of the world has rapidly increased. It is said that 85% of the world's international organizations and film productions use English as their official language in transnational communication and that 90% of the published academic articles in several academic fields are written in English (Melchers & Shaw, 2011). These can be attributed to educational economic or cultural globalization that has made global connections simpler and expanded the world's connectivity more feasible (Jiménez, 2018; Warschauer, 2000; Williams, 2020). Yaccob et al. (2022) highlight that it is critical to identify student needs to work in a complex environment with people who need to interact and collaborate in future work environments. It is argued that the use of English as a global language will expand more, and the number of non-native speakers who need to use English around the globe will outnumber that of native speakers of English (Rao, 2019).

Most colleges, including community colleges in Korea, offer general English courses that often reflect their goals of English education in their courses, and the types of general English courses vary from college to college due to the aspect of skills they wish students to develop. Kim and Lim (2013), who examined the state of English education in 36 colleges via interviews and surveys, categorized the goals of college English education into four aspects based on their findings: 1) to improve practical English skills in conjunction with basic English skills, 2) to develop English skills for official English exams (i.e., TOEIC) for employment, 3) to develop English skills for academic purposes (i.e., English-medium instruction), and 4) to help students to become more a civilized person through the contact of American and British culture and enhance English ability. Kim and Lim point out that most college English education goals are not clearly defined but include a broad description of improving English ability. They suggest it would be desirable for all parties concerned in teaching and learning general English should work together to set goals for general English education.

Some argue that the goal of college general English, as part of general education, must be to help students to develop basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Kim, 2016) and help students to read texts related to student majors and different types of texts such as critiques, editorials, or literary works (Yi, 2014). On the other hand, others (e.g., Gaudelli, 2009; Oh, 2021) view the goal of college English education on a macro level and argue that one of the goals of college English education must be to help students understand the complex and contradictory real world critically and invite as participants in the global community that respond to various crisis that is appearing in various parts of the world through solidarity and cooperation based on global citizenship.

Although colleges have different goals for general English education programs, many studies (Ha, 2010; Kim, 1996; Kim, 2012; Kim, 2016; Miller, 2001; Suh, 2020) have shown that students' needs from general college English programs were "to improve English abilities", and "polishing up their English", which seem still true in the present. The findings of Kim and Kim's (2017) study that examined the perceptions of students and native speakers of English revealed that both students and native speakers of English reported that general English courses in college should be designed for students to develop further the language they have learned in their primary and secondary education and should aim to give them a solid foundation of the English language aspects such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

A study by Oh and Lee (2015), who investigated how the affective factors of the students from level-differentiated classes influence their English learning, suggests a relationship between self-efficacy and English learning. Oh and Lee argue that the students with strong self-efficacy toward English learning showed a better understanding of their needs and wants of English study and suggest helping students build positive self-efficacy. Similarly, a study by Kwon and Kim (2020), which examined factors that affect student satisfaction with English learning, also stresses the importance of promoting motivation and confidence in learning English through various activities. They found a gender difference in student perceptions. They claim that female students showed higher satisfaction with English learning than male students and that students from the third and fourth grades showed higher satisfaction than students from the fifth and sixth grades. Nevertheless, Nunan (2003), who investigated the English curriculum of primary and secondary education in the Asia-Pacific region, including Korea, criticizes that resources that these countries have invested in English education are not achieving the instructional goals desired and suggests learners should be exposed to English for significant progress in a foreign language.

The Present Study

Background Information of The Present Study

In the university where the researcher works, students must take one English course entitled *University English* (hereafter UE) for graduation. UE is the only English mandatory course, and the school recommends that students take UE during their first year in college. UE is a three-level differentiated course comprised of basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. Based on the score of the level test, which students must take before registering for a class, students can sign up for a course accordingly. UE classes meet twice a week for 75 minutes, respectively. Five books are used in each level, one central reading and writing skill book, and four graded readers chosen by their instructor. Reading graded readers is one unique feature of the program. The purpose of reading graded readers is to promote learning by reading various books, and eventually, students find joy in reading in English. Each instructor can select a combination of fiction and non-fiction books for each level from the list compiled from Oxford Grade Readers by the program director.

Participants

A total of 385 students participated in the present study. Among the 385, the number of females and males was 235 and 150, respectively. The nationalities of the students were Korean (71.4%), Chinese (23.6%), Vietnamese (1.8%), Japanese (1.8%), and others (Uzbekistanian, Russian, and Hongkonger) (1.4%). Concerning class standing, 60.3% of the students were first-year students, followed by 15.1% seniors, 14.5% sophomores, and 10.1% juniors. Of the 385, 56.4% of the students (217) were from basic classes, 40.8% (157 students) the intermediate classes, and 2.9% (11 students) were from the advanced class at the time of data collection.

Instrument

The researcher developed a questionnaire to explore students' beliefs and attitudes toward the general English program. It comprised 25 questions, including demographic information, the affective domain of English learning, the viewpoint about the program, and preference for the mode of class. Students were asked to respond to each statement based on the Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha for the items was .880.

Procedure

To collect data, the researcher emailed instructors teaching UE classes, explaining the purpose of the research and asking for their cooperation in the administration of the questionnaire. Then they were requested to send their students a link to the questionnaire and ask them to complete it at week 14. At the time of data collection, all UE classes were running online due to the pandemic.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, *t*-tests, and correlation were performed using SPSS 26. Due to the too small number of advanced-level students (11), an analysis of mean differences was computed only between the basic and intermediate groups. Concerning the responses to the open-ended questions, the researcher translated students' responses verbatim into English.

Results and Discussion

The general English program requires students to read four graded readers throughout the semester regardless of their level. Instructors could select a combination of fiction and non-fiction books from the list based on the levels they teach, besides using one main textbook, a reading and writing skill book. To examine students' viewpoints concerning primarily graded readers, a *t*-test was performed, and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of the *t*-test between the two groups for statements 1 to 4

Item	Level	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
S1 (I enjoyed reading the graded readers.)	Basic	217	4.12	.938	1.991	.047
	Intermediate	157	3.90	1.102		
S2 (The level of the graded readers was suitable for my level.)	Basic	217	3.95	1.055	-.054	.957
	Intermediate	157	3.96	1.091		
S3 (Reading the readers was fun.)	Basic	217	4.09	1.023	1.768	.078
	Intermediate	157	3.89	1.160		
S4 (The graded readers helped me to improve my English skills.)	Basic	217	4.12	.910	1.629	.104
	Intermediate	157	3.95	1.111		

p < .05

In general, the mean scores of both groups showed close to 4 or above, indicating that the two groups hold a positive attitude toward the statements. Both groups showed relatively high mean scores, but the mean scores of the basic group were slightly higher. For Statement 1 (I enjoyed reading the graded readers), the basic group ($M = 4.12$, $SD = .938$)

showed a slightly higher mean score than the intermediate group ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.102$), showing a statistical significance difference between them ($t(372) = 1.991$, $p = .047$). Concerning Statement 2, which asks about the level of suitability of graded readers, the mean score of the basic group was the same as that of the intermediate group ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.055$, $M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.091$, respectively), showing no statistical difference between the two groups ($t(372) = -.054$, $p = .957$). This implies that both groups found the level of the graded readers somewhat appropriate to their English levels. Nation (2006, 2014) argues that to have “adequate comprehension” of text, one needs to know at least 98% of words in that text and that to achieve this 98% vocabulary coverage for challenging texts, one must know the 9,000 most frequently occurring word families in English. Requiring students to read challenging texts, for instance, unmodified texts which are meant for native speakers of English would be impractical and undesirable in a general English course. Indeed, McQuillan (2016) asserts that grade readers, which are modified versions of popular fiction books, can provide a sufficient amount of input, with 98% vocabulary coverage, and serve as one way for students to read more challenging texts.

In regarding Statements 3 (Reading the graded readers was fun) and 4 (The graded readers helped me to improve my English skills), the mean scores of the basic group ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.023$, $M = 4.12$, $SD = .910$) were higher than those of the intermediate group ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.160$, $M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.111$). However, neither of them showed a statistical difference between the two groups ($t(372) = 1.768$, $p = .78$, $t(372) = 1.629$, $p = .104$), respectively. Although the mean score of the basic was slightly higher than that of the intermediate-level students, this can be interpreted that both groups hold a favorable view regarding reading graded readers in class.

Table 2 illustrates the results of a *t*-test for statements concerning the affective domain of English learning. Students from both groups generally showed a positive attitude toward the items examined. Regarding Statement 5 (I gained confidence in English through this class), the mean score for the basic group ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.116$) was marginally higher than that of the intermediate group ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.050$). However, for Statement 6 (I got motivated to study English more through the class), the mean score of the basic group ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .980$) was slightly lower than that of the intermediate group ($M = 4.34$, $SD = .897$). Although there were differences in the mean scores, they were not statistically significant ($t(372) = .425$, $p = .671$, $t(372) = -.617$, $p = .538$, respectively). Nevertheless, this item was one of the items that showed the highest score in both groups. It can be interpreted that they got motivated to improve their English while doing many different activities in class with their peers.

Table 2. Results of the *t*-test between the two groups for statements 5 to 10

Item	Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
S5 (I gained confidence in English through this class.)	Basic	217	4.02	1.116	.425	.671
	Intermediate	157	3.97	1.050		
S6 (I got motivated to study English more through the class.)	Basic	217	4.28	.980	-.617	.538
	Intermediate	157	4.34	.897		
S7 (This class helped me to improve my English.)	Basic	217	4.24	.892	.871	.385
	Intermediate	157	4.16	.984		
S8 (I am satisfied with this class.)	Basic	217	4.36	.882	-.106	.916
	Intermediate	157	4.37	.929		
S9 (This course will be helpful for my future and employment.)	Basic	217	4.23	.972	-.221	.825
	Intermediate	157	4.25	.978		
S10 (I enjoy studying English.)	Basic	217	3.83	1.135	-2.06	.040
	Intermediate	157	4.06	.959		

$p < .05$

Concerning Statement 7 (This class helped me to improve my English), the mean score of the basic group ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .892$) was slightly higher than that of the intermediate group ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .984$). However, the mean difference was not statistically significant ($t(372) = .871$, $p = .385$). For Statements 8 (I am satisfied with the class I am taking now) and 9 (This course will be helpful for my future and employment), the mean scores of the two groups were relatively high, showing the same mean score ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .882$, $M = 4.37$, $SD = .929$; $M = 4.23$, $SD = .972$, $M = 4.25$, $SD = .978$, respectively), but no statistical differences were found in the mean scores ($t(372) = .871$, $p = .385$, $t(372) = -.106$, $p = .916$). This implies that students had a considerably high satisfaction level for their class, and they believed that their class would be helpful when they find employment in the future. Relating to Statement 10 (I enjoy studying English), the mean score of the intermediate group ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .959$) was higher than that of the basic group ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.135$). The difference in the mean scores was statistically significant ($t(372) = -2.059$, $p = .040$). It can be conjectured that learning English could be more challenging for basic-level students. Due to their language proficiency, they probably need to pay attention more to many different aspects of the language while doing classwork, assignments, and required reading for their classes compared to intermediate-level students.

In examining Statement 11 (Some English proficiency is necessary to get employment), both groups showed a relatively strong agreement with a considerably high mean score ($M = 4.58$, $SD = .735$, $M = 4.67$, $SD = 6.34$, respectively). However, no statistical significance was found between the mean scores ($t(372) = -1.267$, $p = .206$). A similar finding is shown in the study by Choi (2021) who claims that nearly 50% of the participants in the study reported that their goal is to achieve a good test score on standardized English tests, which is one of the qualifications required by big companies. In the follow-up statement (I plan to take at least one more English class before graduation), surprisingly, the mean score for this item came out lowest among all items from both groups. The mean scores of the two groups ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.385$, $M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.237$) were below 3.5. It is interesting to note that even though they believe that a certain level of English will be required in getting employment, they do not seem to be keen on continuously learning English after completing the required English course.

Table 3. Results of the *t*-test between the two groups for statements 11 to 14

Item	Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
S11 (Some English proficiency is necessary to get employment.)	Basic	217	4.58	.735	-1.267	.206
	Intermediate	157	4.67	.634		
S12 (I plan to take at least one more English class before graduation.)	Basic	217	3.47	1.385	.266	.790
	Intermediate	157	3.43	1.237		
S13 (UE must be a required course.)	Basic	217	4.18	1.066	.029	.977
	Intermediate	157	4.17	1.020		
S14 (The required number of English courses must be more than one.)	Basic	217	3.90	1.201	.214	.830
	Intermediate	157	3.87	1.096		

$p < .05$

Concerning Statement 13 (UE must be a required course), the mean score of the basic group ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.066$) was roughly the same as that of the intermediate group ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.020$), showing agreement to the statement. The fact that the university has only one required English course presumably made students think positively. Students could study English more by taking elective English courses if they want to; however, the student responses to “taking one more

required English class” did not seem appealing to them. Indeed, the mean score of the basic group ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.201$) and the mean score of the intermediate group ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.096$) for Statement (The required number of English courses must be more than one) turned out to be relatively low. A study by Ha (2009) also found a similar result, which reports that nearly 50% of participants believed that English courses must not be required subjects in college.

Statements 15 (I prefer UE to be conducted ...) and 16 (The most effective class mode for UE is ...) were included to examine to what extent students were ready to return to the classroom after having had a two-and-half-year-of instruction online and to find out their preferred class mode. In addition, they were asked to write a reason for their choice for Statement 15. The frequency for each option is shown in Table 4.

It is interesting to note that students’ responses varied, and so their reasons were. The most preferred class mode of the basic group was an online synchronous class, followed by face-to-face instruction and recorded video lectures. In contrast, the most preferred class mode of the intermediate group was face-to-face instruction, followed by online synchronous class. A combination of recorded video lectures and synchronous classes ranked as the third most preferred mode. Ja’ashan (2015) examined the perceptions of students on blended learning in English courses and found that students’ satisfaction with blended learning was positive, and it enhanced to improve students’ English language skills and made English learning collaborative, interactive, and interesting. He argues that blended learning will be a more significant growth area than online learning in the future.

Table 4. Frequency of students’ preference for a class mode

Item	Level	1	2	3	4	5	6
S15 (I prefer UE to be conducted ...)	Basic	24.4%	20.3%	25.8%	10.1%	4.6%	14.3%
	Intermediate	34.4%	14.0%	19.7%	9.6%	7.0%	15.3%
S16 (The most effective class mode for UE is ...)	Basic	38.2%	12.9%	19.8%	12.9%	6.0%	10.1%
	Intermediate	52.9%	8.3%	14.0%	7.6%	6.4%	10.8%

* 1 = face-to-face instruction, 2 = recorded video lectures, 3 = synchronous class, 4 = a combination of synchronous class & recorded video lectures, 5 = a combination of face-to-face instruction & synchronous class, 6 = a combination of recorded video lectures & synchronous class

Some of the iterative reasons for preferring synchronous classes that the basic group reported, which seem noteworthy, were that they could instantly use the Internet or a dictionary to search for information or words when they do class activities such as pair and group discussion and independent class work in class. They also reported that they could instantly ask questions through the chat box to their professor, get feedback immediately, and feel less shy online. On the other hand, one-third of the intermediate group students preferred face-to-face instruction because they said they could concentrate on class better, and English is a sound language that needs direct interaction with people to improve. It is much easier to understand the professor’s and peers’ non-verbal cues in communication. Despite the various preferred class modes and reasons, many students seem to believe face-to-face instruction would be the most effective for the general English program. This is presumably because online classes limit direct interactions with their instructor and peers, which is also found in Kim’s (2020) and Lee and Kim’s (2020) studies. Bijeikiene et al. (2011) also point out that distance learning could disadvantage beginner-level students or those who need more assistance. They argue that even though students find online classes more convenient because they could save time commuting to school and review materials any time and anywhere they want with asynchronous classes, students prefer face-to-face instruction because online instruction lacks instant interactions between the instructor and students and between their peers.

Student Responses to The Open-ended Question

Students were encouraged to write comments freely about the general English program. Various comments were reported, and some were mentioned iteratively, which were worthy of note. The top five comments with the most occurrences from each group are presented below.

Table 5. Students' comments on the general English program

#	Basic level	Intermediate level
1	Wanting to improve speaking skills	Wanting to improve speaking skills
2	Wanting face-to-face instruction next semester	Wanting a reduction in the number of assignments
3	Wanting a reduction in the number of assignments	Wanting more diverse activities in class
4	Satisfactory with their class	Wanting UE to be a 3-credit course
5	Wanting to learn more practical English	Wanting more different levels of classes

The two groups of students expressed various opinions concerning the program. The most frequently mentioned comment from both groups was that many students aspire to improve their English speaking skills by communicating more in the classroom with their instructors and peers. A similar result is found in the study by Liu et al. (2011). They found that most students from both general English classes and English Academic purpose courses believed that they lacked sufficient speaking skills to interact with foreigners, wanting a more general conversational skill that enables them to converse with others in English fluently.

The second most iterative comment from the basic group was that many students were looking forward to returning to the classroom next semester. In contrast, the second most mentioned comment by the intermediate was a request for a reduced number of assignments. Interestingly this same comment ranked third by the basic group of students. This finding needs caution to interpret. The fact that each instructor is assigned to teach a couple of different levels of UE classes each semester could contribute to this phenomenon. In other words, it could be particular instructors who taught both basic and intermediate-level courses, and they preferred giving assignments to help students learn English outside the class.

Several students from the intermediate group reported that they wished there were more diverse activities focusing on the practice of speaking and that there were more different levels of classes. In addition, they want UE to be a 3-credit course. UE classes run 90 minutes for two days per week, but somehow they are designated as a 2-credit course. Students might find it unfair compared to other classes that allot three credits for the same hour of instruction they receive.

Regardless of their preferred class mode and reasons, it seems evident that students' goal in UE is to improve their English ability, and there is a strong desire from students looking forward to returning to the classroom where instant interactions and communication with their peers and instructors occur.

Correlation between The Statements and Student Nationality, English Level, and Gender

Correlation analysis (Spearman's rho) was performed to examine the relationship between the statements and three variables, nationality, English level, and gender of the participants. Table 6 shows the result of the analysis.

Table 6. Correlation analysis between statements and three factors

		Nationality	English Level	Gender	
Spearman's rho	S1	Correlation Coefficient	.188**	-.005	.048
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.927	.352
		N	385	385	385
	S2	Correlation Coefficient	.093	-.091	.058
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.069	.075	.260
		N	385	385	385
	S3	Correlation Coefficient	.227**	-.062	.042
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.228	.412
		N	385	385	385
	S4	Correlation Coefficient	.122	.015	.013
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.775	.797
		N	385	385	385
	S5	Correlation Coefficient	.095	-.039	.085
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.062	.449	.096
		N	385	385	385
	S6	Correlation Coefficient	.151**	.007	.070
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.897	.170
		N	385	385	385
	S7	Correlation Coefficient	.129*	-.018	.074
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.720	.147
		N	385	385	385
	S8	Correlation Coefficient	.094	.011	.096
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.065	.830	.060
		N	385	385	385
	S9	Correlation Coefficient	.094	.037	-.014
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.065	.464	.783
		N		385	385
	S10	Correlation Coefficient	-.058	.012	.090
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.255	.819	.079
		N	385	385	385
	S11	Correlation Coefficient	.144**	-.009	.004
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.859	.936
		N	385	385	385
	S12	Correlation Coefficient	.289**	-.019	.011
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.712	.832
		N	385	385	385
	S13	Correlation Coefficient	.190**	-.034	.035
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.511	.495
		N	385	385	385
	S14	Correlation Coefficient	.112*	.007	.041
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	.894	.417
		N	385	385	385
	S15	Correlation Coefficient	.215**	.098	.050
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.054	.325
		N	385	385	385
	S16	Correlation Coefficient	.197**	.098	.050
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.054	.325
		N	385	385	385

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There was no relationship between the statements and English level and between the statements and student gender. However, ten out of sixteen statements showed a relationship with student nationality, with some showing a stronger relationship, for instance, Statement 3 (Reading the graded readers was fun) ($r = .227, p = .000$), Statement 12 (I plan to take at least one more English class before graduation) ($r = .289, p = .000$), and Statement 15 (I prefer to University English to be conducted ...) ($r = .215, p = .000$). The correlation coefficients showed a statistical significance. Other statements such as Statement 1 (I enjoyed reading the graded readers) ($r = .188, p = .000$), Statement 6 (I got motivated to study English more through the class), and 7 (This class helped me to improve my English) ($r = .151, p = .003, r = .129, p = .011$, respectively), and Statement 11 (Some English proficiency is necessary to get employment) and 13 (UE must be a required course) ($r = .144, p = .005, r = .190, p = .000$, respectively) were weakly correlated with student nationality, and they were also statistically significant.

Gender and English proficiency did not show any relationship to the student's perceptions of the general English program, but a relationship was found between nationality and the student's perceptions. Approximately 30% of the participants were international students with different educational backgrounds, including English education in their homeland. In addition, these international students have more challenges in studying at a Korean college compared to Korean students as they need to study the Korean language used in most classes they take and the English language required to use in their English class. It is presumed that these could be attributed to the perceptions of students on the general English program.

Conclusion and Implications

The present study explored the beliefs and attitudes of students of the basic and intermediate levels on the general English program conducted online and the relationship between students' beliefs and attitudes and three factors (nationality, gender, and English proficiency). The results showed that students from both basic and intermediate levels had a relatively high satisfaction level with the program and a positive attitude. They reported that they increased their confidence and got motivated to learn English more. In addition, both groups mentioned that reading the graded readers helped improve their English. Many students from both groups agreed on the need to increase the number of required English courses, but they were not very enthusiastic about taking an extra English class in the future. In addition, students from both groups selected face-to-face instruction and synchronous classes as the most effective class modes for the program, and their primary goal was to improve their English ability through the course. Lastly, the correlation analysis showed that students' beliefs and attitudes did not relate to student gender and English proficiency. However, students' beliefs and attitudes were related to their nationality.

Students who participated in the study have had distance learning for over two years due to the pandemic, so they seem to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of online learning and their preference for class mode. For language learning, students can easily access the Internet to search for specific information and use a dictionary to search for words they want to use while they have a class online. However, learning a language involves learning both verbal and non-verbal communication. Thus, it seems imperative for schools to consider implementing a blended learning approach by adopting the advantages of online learning and face-to-face learning to maximize student learning. In addition, the findings

clearly showed that they want to be assisted in improving their English abilities through the program. This seems to imply that one of the goals in general English education must be to focus on improving students' English competence, which is one of the components that Hunter et al. (2006) argue is necessary to become a globally competent person.

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Author Information

Kim, Misook: Kyung Hee University, Professor

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9062-9130>