The Relationship between University Students' Exposure to Foreign Culture and Global Competency

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The growing interdependency among nations around the world has called the needs for individuals to be globally competent. The so-called Koreans' 'crazy wave' toward learning English and studying abroad is one of the prominent reflections of this phenomenon. However, only a limited number of studies have investigated the relationship between ones' exposure to foreign culture and their levels of global competency. The current study attempts to identify global competency and assess the relationship between university students' exposure to foreign culture and their level of global competency. One hundred twenty one students at 'A' university located in Seoul participated in the online survey. The data were analyzed with SPSS 17.0, using frequency analysis, correlation analysis, and independent-sample t-test. Only partial aspects of global competency showed a significant relationship with students' exposure to foreign culture. While the levels of global understanding and English proficiency were all positively related to all types of students' exposure to foreign culture, the levels of intercultural sensitivity varied depending on the types of exposure to foreign culture. The ways to promote university students' general level of global competency are discussed based on the findings of the current study.

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Key words: global competency, global understanding, intercultural sensitivity, foreign culture exposure, foreign language proficiency

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of science and technology has brought numerous changes to the 21st century. The changes led the society to undergo another paradigm shift, the coming of a globalization era. The development of transportation and telecommunication has diminished physical distances around the globe and blurred the boundaries among nations. An increasing number of governments, corporations, and individuals have started making connections with one another regardless of their nationality. The cultures of these organizations and individuals have also become diverse. This new social phenomena has called the needs for individuals to possess additional competencies in political, cultural, and personal understanding, not only of their own nation, but also of the other nations as well.

The United States of America is one of the typical multicultural societies where people should understand another culture within the American culture. The recognition of the importance of global competence in the U.S. goes back to half a century when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the world's first satellite in 1957 (Hunter, 2004). During this period, foreign language learning centers and courses, such as geography, history, and economics, were established in universities around the U.S. for the first time. After September 11, 2001, which has become a second significant turning point in their national and international state, the U.S. once again has started putting a full-scale effort in developing globally competent human resources. The employment policies of the U.S. government, corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and international organizations have started reflecting the needs for hiring globally prepared employees (Bikson, Treverton, Moini, & Lindstrom, 2003; Hunter, 2004; Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006).

The U.S.'s accelerated concern on developing individuals' globally preparedness has also rendered significant impact on the Korean society, as the influence of the U.S. on Korea grew stronger (Hahn, 2004). The uncertainty aroused by the economic crisis in Korea is one of the key factors that made huge contributions in escalating Koreans' concern on developing globally competent human resources

(Park & Song, 2008). Since then, the Korean government and universities have started paying their full attention on the issue of globalization. The government and universities' efforts in developing global competency have created another momentous trend among Koreans—the crazy waves for learning English and studying abroad. Despite the so-called 'crazy wave' blown rigorously within the Korean society, it is still questionable as to whether such a trend was preceded by a profound understanding on the notion of global preparedness (Kim, 2006).

Ever since there has been consideration on the issue of globalization after 1995 in Korea, numerous studies discussing related fields, including curriculum development in terms of intercultural education, English education, information studies, etc., have been presented (Kim, 2006). Despite the common belief that those who expose themselves to foreign culture would necessarily achieve an outstanding level of global competency, only an insufficient number of Korean studies have discussed the substantial significance of the relationship between the exposure to foreign culture and acquired global abilities (Lee, 2009). Specifically, contrary to the fact that an increasing number of studies have started examining the effectiveness of study abroad programs and English immersion programs, the attention given to the individual's exposure habit in their everyday life is very little. Thus, in order to balance the focus of international exposure, which is currently outrageously inclined to the effects of study abroad and English immersion education, this study discusses individual's exposure habit to the foreign culture as well.

The major objectives of this study were 1) to examine university students' current and past exposure to foreign culture, 2) to assess university students' level of global competency, and 3) to identify the relationship between university students' exposure to foreign culture and their level of self-perceived global competency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Exposure to Foreign Culture

Broadly, there are two types of exposures to foreign culture. One is the exposure occurring within the real environment, and the other is the exposure under an unreal environment (Sodnomdarjaa, 2006). The exposure within the real environment is

more likely to occur when learners are living in the target language environment, while the exposure under an unreal environment is often taking place when learners are living in their native culture.

Experiences abroad (Norris & Gillespie, 2009) can be an example of exposure within the real environment. Studying abroad for a full year, participating in university course enrollment, internship participation, and host family living arrangements are all considered good examples of this type. Learners' access to authentic materials, such as books, movie clips, broadcasting programs including news, drama, sitcoms, etc., from the target culture can be examples of exposure under an unreal environment. As the world has become more globalized with the increase of people moving from continent to continent, and the advancement of communication technology, access to any foreign culture of this type is easier than ever.

However, views on exposure to foreign cultures contrast with one another (Feliciano, 2001). Most studies in language education and intercultural education focus on the positive effects of exposure. Numerous studies have proved the benefits of study abroad programs (e.g., Dwyer, 2004; Gorka & Niesenbaum, 2001; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Williams, 2005, etc.). Not only do overseas exposure experiences have a benefit in enhancing one's foreign language ability, but the experiences also have a benefit in one's general global literacy. Robinson and Nocon (1996) contend that students who took part in a project that was embedded with foreign culture showed enhanced attitudes toward the language used in the target culture as well as an understanding of the target culture and the people.

However, not all cases of exposure created absolutely positive results. Studies on learner motivation contend that exposure to foreign culture should be taken place in conjunction with the learners' motivation to learn (Murray, 2010). According to Murray, learners can be stimulated best by exposing themselves to authentic materials. Wang's (2009) study on negative effects of exposure to foreign cultures describes learners' resilience tendency toward the target culture. According to the study, variables, such as age, gender, target language proficiency, academic level, country of origin, and previous experience of exposure, are vital factors that control the effects of exposure (Lee et al., 1981; Stafford et al., 1980; cited in Wang, 2009). The exposure that lacks consideration in the learner factor may end in failure.

Global Competency

The Definition of Global Competency

As a reflection of the current trend of the globe, there are many studies that stress people to achieve global competence in order to survive the challenges of globalization (Hunter, 2004; Olson & Kroeger, 2001). Studies on global competence are using the term to describe the attitude, skills, and ability (Dunkely, 2009). Yet, there is no consensus on the meaning or on the concepts of global competence, or any other related terms, such as transnational competence or global citizens (Hunter, 2004).

Definitions on global competency or a globally competent person vary in previous studies. However, there are notable constituencies in contents. Lambert (1996) identifies a globally competent person as one who has knowledge of current affairs, who is able to empathize with others, who maintains a positive attitude, and who has a certain level of foreign language competence and the ability to perform a task in something foreign.

Universities or research institutions working for global education are particularly keen to figure out the nature of global competence. In order to provide education to develop students' global competence, a number of universities in the U.S. have come up with their own definitions of global competence. As an example, the University of Pittsburgh sees global competence as "the ability to work effectively in different international settings, an awareness of the major currents of global change and the issues arising from such changes, knowledge of global organizations and business activities, the capacity for effective communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries, and a personal adaptability to diverse cultures" (Cited in Hunter, 2004, p. 10).

Olson and Kroeger (2001) provides operative definition of a globally competent person is the one who has "enough substantive knowledge, perceptual understanding, and intercultural communication skills to effectively interact in our globally interdependent world" (p. 117). According to the study, the knowledge comprises cultural, linguistic, and world issues. A person with a perceptual

understanding maintains positive attitudes toward globalization. These attitudes include "open-mindedness, resistance to stereotyping, complexity of thinking, and perspective consciousness" (Olson & Kroeger, 2001, p. 118). They also identified the components clustered under intercultural communication as "adaptability, empathy, cross-cultural awareness, intercultural relations, and cultural mediation" (Olson & Kroeger, 2001, p. 118).

The Stanley Foundation and the American Council on International Intercultural Education (1996) sees a globally competent person as one who is "able to understand the interconnectedness of peoples and systems, to have a general knowledge of history and world events, to accept and cope with the existence of different cultural values and attitudes, and indeed, to celebrate the richness and benefits of this diversity" (Cited in Hunter, 2004, p. 11). Although limited, Korean researchers also have endeavored to investigate the issue. What differed from the researches of other nations was that Korean studies on global competency were usually discussed under a business environment. Park (1997) categorizes competencies required for a global leader into two aspects. Cognitive aspects included global literacy and intercultural leadership, communication ability, networking skills, such as global competitiveness, creativity, receptivity, information power, problem-solving skill, knowledge of high technology, and global customer orientation. Psychological aspects comprise of willingness to participate and challenge, global mind, intercultural receptivity, strategic problem solving skill, patience and constant efforts for goal achievement, etc. Other studies (Lee, 2004; Park & Song, 2008) in the Korean context also include similar constituents. Table 1 presents a list of definitions on global competency in the Korean context.

TABLE 1
Definitions on Global Competency in the Korean context

Researches (Year)	Knowledge	Skills	Attitude
Park (1997)	· Global literacy & common knowledge · Intercultural managing ability · Strategic thinking	· Global manner and etiquette · Case study · Strategic problem solving skill · Information ability	· Willingness to initiate · Global information mind · Receptivity toward other culture
Lee (2004)	· Understanding of other culture · Knowledge of general management · Knowledge of specific task	· English & other foreign language ability · Adaptability · Information collection & analyses · Conflict management · Systematic thinking · Motivation, etc.	· Global business mind · Autonomy · Personal characteristics
Park & Song (2008)	· Understanding of globalization · Understanding of global economy · Understanding of other cultures	· Preparedness for global business · Communication ability · Manner & etiquette · Language · IT · Image making	· Openness & flexibility · Honesty & enthusiasm

The Benefits of Global Competency

Many studies have proved the positive effects of becoming a globally competent person or a globally competent organization (Arthur, 2000; Hunter, 2004). First, globally competent individuals have the insight to embed cross-cultural and international experience into their career development (Hanson, 1990). Globally

competent people will take tremendous advantages in their workplace by making themselves marketable. Besides knowledge and skills, globally competent individuals are able to develop a perspective of themselves as active participants in the globalized world. As a result, these individuals with global competency are enabled to prepare themselves more efficiently in building their career paths.

Second, global competency contributes to organizations. Research has proved that working in a culturally diverse team results in increased creativity when the team members have a global mind-set toward adaptation (Brett, Behfar, & Kern, 2006). It is predictable for organizations with globally competent individuals to create positive results in productivity due to the improved level of performance. However, certain conditions are required to maximize the individuals' and the organizations' global competency. Bouquet, Morrison, and Birkinshaw (2004) showed that the performance of the team was superior when the top management team put attention to global issues. According to the study, firms that are ranked at the two extremes of the attention level exhibited different performance results. A noteworthy finding was also found on the relationship between the world's global competency and sustainable development. Leiserowitz, Kates, and Parris (2005) suggested that globally competent public supports the main construct of sustainable development.

The Subcomponents of Global Competency

a. Global understanding.

Global understanding, which is an essential element for a globally competent person consists of two aspects. One is the ability to view the world as a unity, while the other is to perceive the diversity of its constituents. The two concepts have been considered distinct until recently when scholars started making conceptual connections between the two aspects of global mindset. A global perspective is a view which promotes the unity of mankind and the interdependence of humankind. As the world is becoming mutually dependent, the importance of having a global perspective increases around the globe (Zhai & Scheer, 2004).

Many studies on global understanding asserted the merits of gaining overseas

experiences in raising a global perspective (Odell, Williams, Lawrence, Gartin, & Smith, 2002; Zhai & Scheer, 2002; cited in Zhai & Scheer, 2004). Zhai and Scheer (2004) found that students who had more contact with people from other cultures were more likely to have higher global understanding and positive attitudes toward cultural diversity.

b. Intercultural sensitivity

There are six stages in intercultural sensitivity (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). The stages are divided by the level of subjectivity each stage has in experiencing differences. The first three stages are ethnocentric (denial, defense, and minimization), and the rest three are ethnorelative (acceptance, adaptation, and integration) (Olson & Kroeger, 2001).

Ethnocentric people view the world as if their culture were central to all existing realities. These people believe they are superior to others. The first stage of ethnocentrism is *denial* stage, which is the purest form of ethnocentrism. People in this stage do not experience any cultural difference around them. The second stage is *defense* stage which happens when people from the *denial* stage begin to perceive difference. The final stage of ethnocentrism is *minimization* stage in which the perceived difference is de-intensified, compared to cultural similarities.

On the other hand, ethnorelativisim assumes that any existing cultures should be understood in a relative sense to each other. The concept also implies that perspectives and behaviors can only be understood within a cultural context. Moving on to the first stage of ethnorelativism is the *acceptance* stage. People who belong to this stage appreciate the difference and respect them. The next stage is the *adaptation* stage, which involves enhanced skills to socialize with people from other cultures by relating and communicating with them. The final stage of ethnorelativism is *integration* stage. People in this stage often have multiple identities that are applicable to more than single culture. For individuals to become more interculturally sensitive, they have to progress themselves from the *denial* stage to *integration* stage.

c. Foreign language proficiency

In intercultural communication, the individual variables one perceives when communicating with others are reduced from complex human beings to their national or cultural identity. Thus, the interpretation of verbal or nonverbal behavior

can be reinforced further when it is assumed that learning a language involves assimilating themselves to a person from the culture where they speak the target language Therefore, learning the language of other culture enables both the linguistic competence and the intercultural competence. By interacting with people from another culture, people need to make sure a shared understanding by people of different social identities. In this process, people begin to develop their ability to interact with people from another culture and begin to develop multiple identities including their own individuality (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). Possessing this multiple identity contributes in making one to think and behave in a more ethnorelative way.

Opposing views on the significance of the relationship between foreign language ability and global preparedness do exist (Chi, 2007; Kim, 2006). Reversed from the world's recent trend that highlights the significance of the relationship between globalization and English, yet some Korean literatures concerning globalization and global preparedness excludes discussion on the importance of foreign language.

Studies on Foreign Exposure & Global Competency

Chi (2007) studied whether the number of visits to foreign cultures had a significant relationship in the university students' level of global mindset. The study found that students in Korea with more experience in foreign cultures were more likely to behave with a globally-prepared mindset. Cushner and Mahon (2002) also found that student teachers with overseas teaching experience showed positive beliefs toward the world "as evidenced through increased cultural awareness and improved self-efficacy, as well as professional development in terms of global-mindedness" (p. 44).

Studies on students' study abroad experiences have exhibited positive effects of foreign culture exposure. These studies particularly focused on the effects of the learners' language skills gained through their foreign culture exposure (e.g., Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995; Carson & Longhini, 2002; Freed, 1998; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Norris & Gillespie, 2009) or through the students' psychological development (e.g., Herman, 1996; Lathrop, 1999; Laubscher, 1994; Wortman, 2002; Norris & Gillespie, 2009). Through foreign language exposure, Norris and Gillespie (2009) reported that the direct exposure to foreign culture affected the subjects' setting of career paths, particularly with global professions. Empirical

studies provided evidence that there was a positive relationship between one's exposure to foreign culture and intercultural sensitivity (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Olson & Kroeger, 2001).

METHODS

Definitions of Key Terms

Throughout this paper, exposure to foreign culture includes three different types of experiences or habits as follows: 1) students' substantial experience abroad in the past, which refers to over three months of residence in a foreign country or over three times of repetitive visits to a foreign country, 2) students' current repetitive and continuous exposure habits in Korea, and 3) students' education experience in taking related college courses.

The term 'globally competent person' used in this paper consulted Remiers's (2008, 2009) definition. According to Reimers, a globally competent person has 1) *global understanding* - deep knowledge and understanding of world issues and of globalization, and a capacity to communicate critically and creatively within the boundary of global village, 2) *intercultural sensitivity* - positive disposition toward cultural difference, and 3) *foreign language proficiency* [2] – communication proficiency to be able to speak and understand a foreign language. *Global understanding* is comprised of *substantive knowledge, perceptual understanding, and intercultural communication skill*, whereas *intercultural sensitivity* is composed of individuals' *acceptance* tendency, *adaptation* tendency, and *integration* tendency.

Research Questions

The study was designed to answer the following questions.

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[2] English proficiency was used as the foreign language proficiency in this st udy.

1) What are university students' levels of *global competency*?

   In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions were addressed.

   - What are the university students' levels of *global understanding* in terms of *substantive knowledge, perceptual understanding,* and *intercultural communication skill*?
   - What are the university students' levels of *intercultural sensitivity* in terms of *acceptance, adaptation,* and *integration* tendency?
   - What are the university students' levels of self-perceived *English proficiency*?

2) What is the nature of relationship between university students' *exposure to foreign culture* and their *global competency*?

   - Are there relationships between university students' past *experience abroad* and their *global competency*?
   - Are there relationships between university students' *current exposure to foreign culture* and *global competency*?
   - Are there relationships between university students' *education experiences* with college courses related to global issues and their *global competency*?
   - Are there relationships between *the current exposure types* to foreign culture that university students have and their *global competency*?

Participants

The subjects of this study were all business majors and female undergraduate students[3] of 'A' university in Seoul, Korea (n=121). The data used for the analysis included only the responses from students who completed the survey. Among 145 students, 121 students (83.4%) have marked all of the answers of the questionnaire. Subjects' year in the university varied. They all had received 12 years of formal education in and/or out of Korea before they entered the university. The respondents' intercultural experiences varied. The responses were collected through an online survey.

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[3] In order to control the gender and major effect, data was collected from all female business major students.

1) Participants' *past exposure* abroad

The number of students with substantial experiences abroad, in other words, who had been in one or more than one foreign countries for over three months or have visited the same region repetitively, was smaller (40.5%) than those who did not have any experiences abroad (59.5%).

2) Participants' *education experience* of taking college courses related to globalization, international relations, and intercultural studies

A little less than 45 percent of the students have taken courses that deal with globalization, international relations, or intercultural studies at the university. As more universities realize the impact of globalization, an increasing number of universities require one or more courses in the realm of globalization in order to graduate. Therefore, most students will be given opportunities to take related courses. Table 2 shows the foreign experiences of university students.

TABLE 2
University Students' Past Experiences to Foreign Culture and Education Experience

Types of Exposure	Yes	No
Past Experience Abroad	40.5% (n=49)	59.5% (n=72)
Education Experience of Taking Related College Courses	44.6% (n=54)	55.4% (n=67)

3) The participants' *current exposure* to foreign culture

There were three different types of *current exposure* to foreign culture – *one-way source*, *contact with international people outside Korea,* and *contact with international people within Korea*.

Among the students who have current exposure to foreign culture, the ones who do not have exposures to *one-way sources,* such as books, music, and movies, were 36.4%; the ones who do not have contacts with international people abroad were 51.2%; and the ones who do not have contacts with international people within Korea were 50.4%. This means that there are more students who are exposed to

foreign cultures through one-way sources than those who have contacts with international people. This implies the importance of English ability in the Korean society. Since English ability is considered as an important asset for Korean university students, particularly for those who are job hunting, studying English has become an obligatory for most university students. For this reason, even students who are not deeply interested in global issues or in foreign cultures read books or watch movies that deal with a foreign culture. The relatively higher accessibility to internet sources seems to contribute in obtaining the one-way exposure.

In contrast, there are relatively smaller opportunities for students to have contacts with international people both inside and outside of Korea. Many students mentioned that the opportunity to meet international people in Korea was limited unless they actively seek for such occasions. Global lounges established in universities and courses with international students were sources of those exposures. Since most Korean universities initiate globalizing the campus, the opportunity for students to meet international people also is expected to increase drastically in the near future. The type and frequency of university students' *current exposure* to foreign culture are summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 3
The Frequency of University Students' Current Exposure Type

Sources of Exposure	Never	Bimonthly	Monthly	Biweekly	Weekly	Daily
One-Way Sources	36.4% (n=44)	3.3% (n=4)	10.7% (n=13)	13.2% (n=16)	16.5% (n=20)	19.8% (n=24)
Contacts With Int'l People out of Korea	51.2% (n=62)	28.1% (n=28)	10.7% (n=13)	10.7% (n=13)	3.3% (n=4)	0.8% (n=1)
Contacts With Int'l People in Korea	50.4% (n=61)	21.5% (n=26)	5.0% (n=6)	14.0% (n=17)	3.3% (n=4)	5.8% (n=7)

The Instrument and Data Analysis

The survey questions were divided into three parts. The first part of the questionnaire required demographic information. The respondents were asked to mark their experience abroad as well as their habits of exposure to a foreign culture in the second part. The third part of the survey was where the respondents' global

competency, which subordinates global understanding, intercultural sensitivity, and English proficiency, were measured. This part consisted of 23 close-ended questions on a four-point Likert scale. Some items of the original indices, which can be applied only to the situation in the U.S., were modified or omitted in order to be applied to the Korean context. Moreover, the questions were translated into Korean since all respondents were native speakers of Korean. Questions assessing the variables are summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Survey Question Items

Dependent Variable	Assessed Area	# of Items	Source
Global Understanding	Substantive Knowledge	4	Olson & Kroeger's (2001) Global Competency Indexed Questions
	Perceptual Understanding[4]	1	
	Intercultural Communication Skill	3	
Intercultural Sensitivity	Acceptance Tendency	4	Bennett's (1993) Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Cited in Olson & Kroeger, 2001)
	Adaptation Tendency	4	
	Integration Tendency	3	
English Proficiency		4	Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (NCLRC, 2009)
Total		23	

Since English is considered as the most influential language both in and out of the nation, the participants' English ability was assessed as the foreign language ability. Participants' self-perceived English ability was assessed for reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Students' proficiency in foreign languages other than English was also included in the substantive knowledge section of the global understanding scale.

For data analysis, SPSS 17.0 program was used. Frequency Analysis, Descriptive Analysis, Correlation Analysis, Independent-Sample T-Test, and One-Way ANOVA

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[4] According to the validity test result, the scale that measured students' perceptual understanding of globalization consisted only of a single question item. Thus, among 23 question items, question number five, which measured students' perceptual understanding, was not included for the analysis of the current study.

were used. The standard for determining the significance was $p < .05$. The methods used for each factor was as follows:

TABLE 5
Analysis Methods for the Current Study

Factors	Analysis Method
University Students' Experiences Abroad University Students' Continuous Exposure to Foreign Culture University Students' Education Experience in Related College Courses	Frequency Analysis
University Students' Level of Global Understanding University Students' Level of Intercultural Sensitivity University Students' Level of Self-Perceived English Proficiency	Descriptive Analysis
The Relationship Between Past Experience Abroad & Global Competency The Relationship Between Current Exposure to Foreign Culture & Global Competency The Relationship Between Education Experiences Related to Global Issues & Global Competency	Independent-Sample T-Test ($\alpha = .05$)
The Relationship Between the Type of Exposure Source & Global Competency	Correlation Analysis ($\alpha = .05$)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

University Students' Levels of Global Competency

Participants' Level of Global Understanding

The respondents' level of global understanding was measured by a four point Likert scale adapted from Olson and Kroeger's (2001) study. The ratings ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Table 6 identifies the mean scores for each factors of the global understanding scale. The Cronbach's α assessed for the scale of *substantive knowledge* and *intercultural communication ability* was .749 and .869, respectively.

TABLE 6
Respondents' Level of Global Understanding

Global Understanding Scale	# of Items	Min.	Max.	Mean	Cronbach's α
Substantive Knowledge		1.00	4.00	2.34	
#1. I have substantive knowledge about at least one other culture outside of Korea.		1.00	4.00	2.83	
#2. I am interested and spend considerable time working on global issues.	4	1.00	4.00	2.63	.749
#3. I have substantive competence in analyzing global issues and a working knowledge of concepts and methods than can describe, explain, and predict changes in global systems.		1.00	4.00	2.23	
#4. I use a language other than my native language at least 25% of the time.		1.00	4.00	1.66	
Intercultural Communication Ability		1.00	4.00	2.76	
#5. I have learned how to produce work with people from other places in the globe.		1.00	4.00	2.60	
#6. I feel self-confident and comfortable socializing with people from other cultures.	3	1.00	4.00	2.70	.869
#7. I have the ability to deal flexibly with and adjust to new people, places, and situations.		1.00	4.00	2.98	

The mean score of students' *intercultural communication ability* (mean=2.76) was higher than their *substantive knowledge* (mean=2.34). Among the items asked for substantive knowledge, the statement that gained the strongest agreement was, "I have the ability to deal flexibly with and adjust to new people, places, and situations (mean=2.98)." On the other hand, the statement with the weakest agreement was, "I use a language other than my native language at least 25 percent of the time (mean=1.66)." This is because Korean students have more exposure to one-way sources than exposure to international people.

Participants' Level of Intercultural Sensitivity

Table 7 shows the mean scores of respondents' *intercultural sensitivity*. The Cronbach's αs coefficients for *intercultural acceptance, intercultural adaptation, intercultural integration* were .807, .658, and .567, respectively. The students reported a high level of *intercultural acceptance* tendency (mean=3.42), and moderate-high levels of *intercultural adaptation* tendency (mean=2.74) and *intercultural integration* tendency (mean=2.71).

Several studies have revealed that females tend to be interculturally more sensitive than males (Chi, 2007; Olson & Kroeger, 2001). The result of the current study is in consistency with several previous studies that report highly significant correlation between gender and intercultural sensitivity. The intercultural sensitivity seems to be higher than intercultural sensitivity of previous studies because all respondents of this study were female.

Among the three subcomponents of intercultural sensitivity-*intercultural acceptance, intercultural adaptation*, and *intercultural integration*-the mean score of *intercultural acceptance* was higher than the mean score of *intercultural adaptation* and *intercultural integration*. Among the 11 statements regarding intercultural sensitivity, the statement with the most agreement was, "I acknowledge and respect cultural difference (mean=3.58)." The one with the least agreement was, "I am able to temporarily give up my own worldview to participate in another worldview (mean=2.49)."

TABLE 7
Respondents' Level of Intercultural Sensitivity

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale	# of Items	Min.	Max.	Mean	Cronbach's α
Intercultural Acceptance		1.00	4.00	3.42	
#8. I acknowledge and respect cultural difference.		1.00	4.00	3.58	
#9. I believe that verbal and nonverbal behavior vary across cultures and that all forms of such behavior are worthy of respect.	4	1.00	4.00	3.59	.807
#10. I think that cultural variations in behavior spring from different worldview assumptions.		1.00	4.00	3.32	
#11. I believe that my worldview is one of many equally valid worldviews.		2.00	4.00	3.28	
Intercultural Adaptation		1.00	4.00	2.74	
#12. I believe that culture is a process. One does not have culture; one engages in culture.		1.00	4.00	3.11	
#13. I am able to temporarily give up my own worldview to participate in another worldview.		1.00	4.00	2.49	
#14. Cultural diversity is a preferable human condition.	4	1.00	4.00	2.74	.658
#15. When faced with a choice about how I am going to respond to a given situation, I am able to shift between two or more cultural perspectives and consciously make a choice to act from one of these cultural contexts.		1.00	4.00	2.64	
Intercultural Integration		1.00	4.00	2.71	
#16. I question my own prejudices as well as all national and cultural stereotypes.		1.00	4.00	2.80	
#17. I feel culturally marginal or on the periphery of two or more cultures.	3	1.00	4.00	2.69	.567
#18. I am able to analyze and evaluate situations from one or more chosen cultural perspectives.		1.00	4.00	2.64	

The Participants' Self-assessed English Proficiency

Table 8 shows the students' self reported English proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The area in which the students felt they were competent was reading comprehension (mean=2.96), whereas the area in which the students felt they were least competent was in their speaking ability (mean=2.44).

TABLE 8
Respondents' Level of English Proficiency

English Proficiency Scale	# of Items	Min.	Max.	Mean	Cronbach's α
English Proficiency	4	1.00	4.00	2.67	
#19. I am proficient in comprehending written English.	1	1.00	4.00	2.96	
#20. I am proficient in writing in English.	1	1.00	4.00	2.86	.894
#21. I am proficient in comprehending spoken English.	1	1.00	4.00	2.47	
#22. I am proficient in speaking in English.	1	1.00	4.00	2.44	

The Relationship between University Students' Exposure to Foreign Culture and Global Competency

The Relationship between Participants' Past Experience Abroad and their Global Competency

There were significant differences in students' levels of global competency depending on their past experience abroad. As Table 9 shows, students who have substantial experience abroad in the past (n=49) show a higher level of *global understanding*, *intercultural sensitivity*, and *English proficiency* than those who do not have such experience (n=71). Students with past exposure show significantly higher, substantive knowledge (p=.000) and intercultural ability (p=.000). Students with *past exposure* had significantly higher English proficiency (p=.000). However, the patterns of the difference in the subcomponents of *intercultural sensitivity* were different. While there were significant differences in the *intercultural adaptation*

level (p=.026) and *intercultural integration* level (p=.002), depending on the students' past experience, there was no significant difference found in their *intercultural acceptance* level.

TABLE 9
T-Test Results of Past Experience & Global Competency

Global Competency	Sub components	Past Experience	T score	P value (2-tailed)	Mean
Global Understanding[5]	Substantive Knowledge	Without Experience With Experience	-4.122	*.000	2.188 2.556
	Intercultural Communication Ability	Without Experience With Experience	-4.023	*.000	2.574 3.027
Intercultural Sensitivity [6]	Intercultural Acceptance	Without Experience With Experience	-1.140	.257	3.382 3.480
	Intercultural Adaptation	Without Experience With Experience	-2.247	*.026	2.667 2.852
	Intercultural Integration	Without Experience With Experience	-3.125	*.002	2.597 2.878
English Proficiency[7]	English Proficiency	Without Experience With Experience	-4.626	*.000	2.451 3.000

a. The relationship between participants' current exposure to foreign culture and their global competency

The repetitiveness and the continuity of *current exposure* to foreign culture showed a significant difference in students' *global understanding* and their level of *English proficiency,* as indicated in Table 10. This means students who currently expose themselves more frequently and repeatedly may have more *substantive*

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[5] Equal variances were assumed for this variable.
[6] Equal variances were assumed for this variable.
[7] Equal variances were not assumed for this variable.

knowledge, intercultural communication ability, and higher *English proficiency* than those who do not.

The significant difference was not found in all the subcomponents of *intercultural sensitivity –intercultural acceptance, intercultural adaptation*, and *intercultural integration*. This can be attributed to the fact that intercultural sensitivity is more of a trait that is created and developed innately. Besides the empirical factors, software factors, such as one's personality or disposition, can function as a more decisive factor in determining one's level of intercultural sensitivity. However, since it is also true that software factors can be enhanced by empirical variables, such as education and experience, developing *intercultural sensitivity* can be of a great subject matter for intercultural or foreign language education.

TABLE 10
T-Test Results of Current Exposure & Global Competency

Global Competency	Subcomponents	Past Experience	T score	P value (2-tailed)	Mean
Global Understanding	Substantive Knowledge	Without Experience With Experience	-5.440	*.000	2.029 2.506
	Intercultural Communication Ability	Without Experience With Experience	-3.799	*.000	2.473 2.914
Intercultural Sensitivity	Intercultural Acceptance	Without Experience With Experience	.256	.799	3.436 3.413
	Intercultural Adaptation	Without Experience With Experience	-.269	.788	2.727 2.750
	Intercultural Integration	Without Experience With Experience	-1.225	.223	2.636 2.752
English Proficiency	English Proficiency	Without Experience With Experience	-4.355	*.000	2.360 2.846

b. The relationship between university students' education experiences of taking college courses and their global competency

T-test results between students' education experience in taking college courses related to global issues shows that the education experience is positively and significantly related with their *global understanding* (p=.000) and *English proficiency* (p=.000). Furthermore, one subcomponent of *intercultural sensitivity-intercultural integration* (p=.015) was related with education experience. The result seems particularly inspiring because it seems to show the effectiveness of intercultural education courses offered by the university.

TABLE 11
T-Test Results of Education Experience & Global Competency

Global Competency	Subcomponents	College courses	T score	P value (2-tailed)	Mean
Global Understanding	Substantive Knowledge	Without Experience With Experience	-3.984	*.000	2.179 2.532
	Intercultural Communication Ability	Without Experience With Experience	-4.153	*.000	2.552 3.012
Intercultural Sensitivity	Intercultural Acceptance	Without Experience With Experience	-1.484	.141	3.366 3.491
	Intercultural Adaptation	Without Experience With Experience	-1.708	.090	2.679 2.819
	Intercultural Integration	Without Experience With Experience	-2.463	*.015	2.612 2.833
English Proficiency	English Proficiency	Without Experience With Experience	-4.278	*.000	2.455 2.944

c. *Relationship between the types of current exposure to foreign culture and participants' global competency*

Significant relationships were found among students' global competency, English proficiency, and the three types of exposure sources (1) one-way sources, such as books, music, movies, etc.; (2) contact with international people in Korea; and (3) contact with international people out of Korea. One-way sources were significantly related to students' global understanding-substantive knowledge (r=.362, p=.000), intercultural communication ability (r=.252, p=.005)-and English proficiency (r=.347, p=.000). Contacts with people abroad were significantly related to students' global understanding-substantive knowledge (r=.434, p=.000), intercultural communication ability (r=.410, p=.000); intercultural sensitivity-intercultural adaptation (r=.204, p=.025), intercultural integration (r=.323, p=.000); and English proficiency (r=.450, p=.000). Contacts with people in Korea were significantly related to students' global understanding-substantive knowledge (r=.352, p=000), intercultural communication ability (r=.315, p=.000); intercultural sensitivity-intercultural integration (r=.229, p=.012); and English proficiency (r=.401, p=.000). It is also noteworthy that there is no significant relationship between the use of one-way sources and all sub-components of intercultural sensitivity. This result may imply that in developing intercultural sensitivity, direct experiences with international people are more helpful than indirect experiences through one-way source exposure. While contacts with foreign people in Korea is significantly related to intercultural integration, contacts with foreign people abroad is significantly related to intercultural integration and intercultural adaptation.

TABLE 12
Correlation between Exposure Types and Global Competency

Global Competency	Subcomponents	One-Way Source		Contacts With People Abroad		Contacts With People in Korea	
		r	P value (2-tailed)	r	P value (2-tailed)	r	P value (2-tailed)
Global Understanding	Substantive Knowledge	.362**	.000	.434**	.000	.352**	.000
	Intercultural Communication Ability	.252**	.005	.410**	.000	.315**	.000
Intercultural Sensitivity	Intercultural Acceptance	-.017	.857	-.058	.531	.152	.096
	Intercultural Adaptation	.028	.763	.204*	.025	.131	.151
	Intercultural Integration	.076	.405	.323**	.000	.229*	.012
English Proficiency	English Proficiency	.347**	.000	.450**	.000	.401**	.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

CONCLUSION

While there has been frequent association between English proficiency and global competency, there has been little research conducted in order to learn about global competency. This study aimed to figure out the relationship between university students' exposure to foreign culture and their global competency. The global competency was defined to be composed of global understanding, intercultural sensitivity, and English ability. Students' exposure to foreign culture were assessed through (1) *past overseas experience*; (2) *current exposure* to foreign culture – through *one-way source* exposure, through *contact with international people outside Korea*, through *contact with international people within Korea*; and

education experience, via taking related classes at the university.

The relationship between different types of exposure and global competency were examined. Students' *global understanding* and *English proficiency* were all significantly related to their *past overseas experience*, *current exposure* to foreign culture, and *education experience* by taking related coursed at the university.

However, the relationship between *intercultural sensitivity* and the exposure was not consistent. Students' past oversea experience was significantly related to two sub-components of *intercultural sensitivity-intercultural adaptation* and *intercultural integration*-while students' education experience at college level was significantly related only one sub component of *intercultural sensitivity-intercultural integration*.

The relationship between students' current exposure to foreign culture and *intercultural sensitivity* was not consistent either. Students' current exposure to foreign culture through one-way source was not significantly related to any of the sub-components of *intercultural sensitivity*. On the other hand, students' current contact with foreign people in Korea was significantly related to *intercultural integration*; and students' current contact with foreign people abroad was significantly related to both *intercultural adaptation* and *intercultural integration*.

With these results we can make tentative conclusions on the relationship between students' foreign culture exposure and global competency. First, the *global understanding* and English proficiency seem to be developed through past exposure, current exposure, and university education. This relationship found between education experience and *global understanding* and English proficiency is inspiring because it seems to show the effectiveness of university courses in developing students' *global understanding* and English proficiency.

Second, developing *intercultural sensitivity* can be of a great subject matter for intercultural or foreign language education. To develop *intercultural sensitivity*, direct exposure with people seems to be more helpful than indirect exposure through one-way exposure sources, such as books, music, movie, etc. Educators need to encourage students to seek opportunities to contact with international people both within and outside the country. This provides a legitimate reason to establish global lounges in universities for students to have opportunities to meet

with international students. When there are no opportunities to provide physical contact with international people, asking students to chat with international people on the internet can be a good assignment. The opportunities for the students to contact international people can increase students' *global understanding*, *intercultural sensitivity*, and *English proficiency*.

Third, looking at the patterns of the relationships, students' contact with foreign people abroad seem to be more powerful than contact with foreign people in their own country in developing *intercultural sensitivity*. This is probably because *intercultural sensitivity* requires moving from ethonocentric stages to ethnorelative stages; and the ethnocentrism can be more easily reduced while ethnorelativism can be more easily promoted in a foreign context than in a familiar environment. This provides legitimate reasons to provide oversea study programs for students to develop global competency.

There are two major outcomes of the current study despite some limitations. First, the study contributed to present the concept of global competency with its subcomponents. Second, by examining the relationships between students' exposure to foreign culture and the levels of global competency, the study provides some fundamental considerations for foreign language educators to enhance students' global competency. More studies are definitely needed about education for global competency. In particular, various efforts at various levels such as useful courses, successful use of global lounge or intercultural events, oversea studies to develop students' global competence should be shared.

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