L2 Writing Practice as Consciousness-Raising for Korean College Students

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Writing instruction has not been actively implemented in secondary schools in Korea, even though the National Curriculum suggests teaching all four communication skills in a balanced way. Taking the aforementioned into account in terms of continuity between secondary and higher education, this study explores college students’ perceptions of writing in English through their actual writing experiences. Over fifty local area students who were advised to keep journals provided their ideas and thoughts on why English writing is hard for them. Data revealed that writing practice made the students aware of their lack of L2 knowledge, such as grammatical, syntactic, or lexical aspects. As the students developed their basic L2 knowledge, they recognized their need for L2 writing instruction. Some students revealed their anxiety through their writing. Others looked back on their learning in the past and reflected upon its shortcomings. Several attentive learners who showed interests in English learning provided their opinions on L2 writing. With the advent of the National English Ability Test (NEAT), the English education environment in Korea will be changing. Thus, more output-oriented communicative activities and more opportunities for output need to be introduced in Korean English education arena for meaningful learning process.

I. INTRODUCTION

As English proficiency has become a key issue for Korean college students, more and more students are interested in developing their language production skills such as speaking or writing. For example, many students plan to go abroad to study, and they worry about writing in English before taking standardized tests such as TOEFL or IELTS. However, writing instruction has been ignored in secondary education in comparison to teaching listening and reading. This is especially true in high school due to the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). According to Kwon, Yoshida, Watanabe, Negishi,
and Naganuma (2004), in a comparison of the English ability of Korean, Japanese and Chinese high school students, the Korean high school students' writing ability was much lower than that of their Japanese and Chinese counterparts, even though their listening and reading abilities were higher.

Though communicative language teaching (CLT) was introduced to employ real communicative activities, in reality, the communicative approach has not been fully implemented in Korea (Jihyeon Jeon, 2009). Moreover, teaching writing skills in Korean secondary schools does not seem to be conducted systematically, although it is noted in the National Curriculum (NC) and English textbooks, except at special high schools. Within the public school sphere, how teachers manage English courses, such as selecting materials and following the NC, appears to depend on school policy and teachers’ discretion.¹

According to research into the teaching of writing in Korean secondary education, writing instruction still focused on the sentence level (Chan-Kyoo Min & Jin Kim, 2005). McDonough and Shaw (2003) stress that “a concept of communication” is needed for students to extend from the sentence level to “longer stretches” which function as “discourse.” Practical writing tasks provide learners with opportunities for thinking about a topic. In addition, it helps them become aware of their learning needs, such as vocabulary and grammar. When learners were given feedback about their writing, they had many “aha moments” (Koestler, 1967, as cited in Finch, 2010). More importantly, writing practice is able to broaden students’ awareness about their language learning situation, thus leading to more development in their thinking processes. Therefore, it is quite important to know students’ thoughts and their needs related to English writing education. In this context, this study tries to explore why writing in English is difficult for Korean college students and how they feel when they write in English in a natural setting. For this research, two questions were sought as follows:

1. Why is English writing hard?
2. Did you enjoy writing in English?

¹ I talked with two high school students in the Kyunggi region and one secondary school English teacher having four years of experience of teaching in the Incheon area. The 3rd grade high school student said that he studied from an English textbook only in the first year. For the past two years, he has been using materials aimed at preparing for the CSAT. The 1st grade student said that on her first day of high school, her English teacher told the students that they did not need to study writing because it is not tested for on the CSAT, even though they take a speaking performance test. The teacher also said that she has never taught writing to any of her classes, both in middle school and in high school.
II. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1. Writing from a Vygotskian Perspective

Since the sociocultural theory of mind (henceforth, SCT) was introduced in 1994 by a group of scholars (e.g., Block, 1996; Lantolf, 1994; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; van Lier, 1994), there has been a steady increase of optimistic research in the second language (L2) area that more focus was being placed on learners, their engagement in the learning process, and the social contexts in naturalistic settings (Lantolf, 2006; Swain & Deters, 2007). According to Lantolf (2006, 2011), SCT refers to “the theory of mental development and functioning” formulated by Vygotsky and his students and colleagues (p. 68). From an SCT perspective, the social environment functions as the source of mental development. A key SCT concept is social interaction between the individual and social contexts through mediational means (e.g., language is viewed as the most important tool of the mind). The activity of languaging, which is defined as the act of speaking or writing, is deemed to be “thinking in progress” (Swain & Deters, 2007). Using language, humans understand the complex phenomena or tasks and plan and organize for the future. That is, languaging means “the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language” to mediate the cognitive process (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011, p. 151). In a recent study, Knouzi, Swain, Lapkin, and Brooks (2010) found that languaging was a self-scaffolding tool that the high languager utilized more efficiently to solve the cognitive problems and to mediate the conceptual development. They suggest that teachers encourage students to interact with each other and to use languaging to understand the content they are learning. It is also essential to raise students’ awareness of languaging as a useful tool and to help them make progress in the process.

In this regard, Hillocks (1995) stresses the environment, which is based on the Vygotskian perspective to provide learners with active learning of complex strategies. As a classroom is not a place where teachers wait while learners become ready for development, this indicates that in Vygotsky’s (1978) phrase, “learning precedes development.” In other words, students are only able to improve academic performance if they have guidance and support from adults or collaborate with peers. These processes lead to a newly developed stage (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998; Hillocks, 1995; Lantolf, 2011). As Vygotsky explains, “the only good learning is that which is in advance of development” (p. 89). Even in the case of young children, writing serves as a prompt which enables them to move forward, developing “a more abstract level of mental functioning” and constructing new motives for their language (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998). Furthermore, Hillocks (1995) insists that without being actively engaged in the learning process, students will not move beyond their current level. Moreover, Kern and Schultz (2005) argue that literacy as social practice plays a key
role in enhancing learner reflection and awareness of the language system and prompting learner identity in L2 from cultural contexts. Therefore, newly defined literacy needs to include “the complex interactions among language, cognition, society, and culture” (p. 382).

2. L2 Writing and Consciousness-Raising

Over the past two decades, researchers in second language learning area have been paying attention to the role of output in that comprehensible input is viewed as necessary but insufficient to achieve high levels of grammatical and sociolinguistic competence (Ellis, 2008; Izumi, 2002; Swain, 2000). Swain's "pushed output" from her Output Hypothesis as a complement to Krashen's Input Hypothesis was proposed through observing the French immersion students. She came to recognize if the learners were not pushed to speak or write, they did not produce beyond their current level in spite of the acquisition-rich input and communicative learning. In other words, the students were able to understand their content-based learning through listening and reading without difficulties at their levels, however, their spoken and written language were incomplete; there were grammatical and syntactic errors (Ellis, 2008; Swain, 1998, 2000).

This evidence led to attention to the importance of the prominent role of output, that is, the meaningful production in language development. In this sense, Swain claimed that output might prompt the learners “to notice.” Schmidt (1990) proposed the Noticing Hypothesis, which explicates that intake is part of input that learners notice. He argued that “conscious processing is a necessary condition for one step in the language learning process, and is facilitative for other aspects of learning” (p. 131), asserting that there is no learning without awareness (Ellis, 2008; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Moreover, with the experience of learning Portuguese as foreign language he stressed the necessity of “conscious learning,” especially in case of adult learners.

Related to the Noticing Hypothesis, Swain argues that output has the three functions. Output can function more efficiently as “noticing the gap” between what the learners want to produce and what they are able to produce (the noticing function). And while they try out new language form and get feedback (the hypothesis testing function), they are engaged in mental activities to solve the problems with their mental effort through metatalk (the metalinguistic function) (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Guerrero, 2005; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Swain, 1998). Focusing on the noticing function, Izumi (2002) especially emphasized the benefits of production process. In an attempt to produce target language, the learners come to realize their existing knowledge and think about what they do not know and also what they need. In addition, their achievements of relevant input make them proceed, leading to becoming aware of and sensitive to what they can and can
not produce in the target language.

Qi and Lapkin (2001) claim that noticing is the essential cognitive process in L2 writing. Though the notion of noticing is largely derived from the source of input, there must exist noticing for output in a wider context of second language acquisition. In other words, as noticing of input is considerably important, “noticing as a result of producing the target language” also has a crucial role in language development (p. 279). Furthermore, producing the target language may work as the triggering (noticing) function in language learning because the output process make the learners conscious both of form and of meaning (Swain, 1998, 2000).

Recently, there have been studies that compare the effectiveness of input-based instruction with output-based instruction in grammar teaching in Korean context. Miran Yang (2004) compared the efficacy between input-based instruction and output-based instruction for college students. The result showed that output instruction contributed to the learners' accurate use of present perfect form. Then, Jae-Kyung Kim and Young-Woo Cho (2010) compared three types of form-focused instruction for college students: traditional instruction, input-based and output-based instruction. Output-based instruction group showed greater improvement than the other groups, even though there was no significant difference on the present perfect tense. Also, Jae-Kyung Kim and Eun-Joo Moon (2010) compared the input-based instruction with the output-based instruction using dictogloss on college students' acquisition. There were positive effects of dictogloss identified in the post-test in proficiency levels. In 2011, Yunkyoung Cho investigated the differential effects of input-based and output-based instruction on high school students' learning. The results indicated that the output group achieved greater improvement than the input group and control group on the production test.

III. METHODS

1. Context and Participants

Sixty-nine students (from three classes) at a local university participated in this qualitative research in the fall semester of 2011. In the three credit course titled “Multimedia English I,” which is an elective course open to all students, the students studied the English language through the integrated skills in a computer-assisted classroom. Their majors varied; there were only seven English majors. There were three foreign students, two from Japan and one from China. Less than ten students had experiences of visiting and studying at English speaking countries. Thus, most of them were born and studied English in Korea. The course textbook was Top Notch 2 (2011, Intermediate). Top
Notch TV, a sitcom-styled DVD for reviewing content students had learned in class, was also utilized. The course was designed to be learner-centered; thus, the students were encouraged to participate in class activities such as speaking in English in front of the class, group reading and discussion, conducting dictogloss and personal dictation (pop song), and writing practice.

2. Content Analysis

This study employed content analysis for analyzing students' responses on why writing in English is difficult. Holsti (1969) defines content analysis as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (p. 14), a method to capture messages contained in materials. According to Krippendorff (2004), in recent years content analysis has been conducting not only quantitative analysis but also qualitative analysis and is understood as being similar to discourse analysis, ethnographic analysis, conversation analysis, and rhetorical analysis.

Content analysis is widely used to describe and analyze the contents of written documents, spoken materials, or illustrated communication such as books, newspapers, advertisements, television programs, or interview transcripts (Dictionary of Statistical & Methodology, 2005). Guerrero (1999) employed content analysis to investigate inner speech as mental rehearsal of the L2. In the qualitative research of a college composition class, AeJin Kang (2003) employed content analysis to examine reflection papers by students. Hyun-Jung Yoo (2006) analyzed scholarly communication of journal articles on the field of English education using content analysis.

3. Instrument

(1) Consciousness-raising Writing

The students were asked to do free writing, but their writing was positioned between controlled and free writing (McDonough & Shaw, 2003) because I encouraged them to utilize what they learned in class, especially for the lower level learners. Higher level students tended to perform the writing tasks fairly easily, while on the other hand, lower level learners tried various methods to complete the task, with which they were having difficulty. Most of the low level learners searched for the expressions they needed with Google translator or a web portal site, and some tried to translate Korean summaries into English (Myung-Hye Huh, 2001a; Kyung-Ja Kim, 2008). They said writing in English was quite hard because many of them did not have any experience writing in English, let alone their English proficiency was limited.
(2) Journal Writing

The students were asked to post their journals on an E-Lecture board every weekend. The goal of reviewing journal writing was focused on self-discovery (Shin-Chul Hong, 2010) for autonomous learning. I neither enforced English only nor limited writing contents to a certain topic. They could write about expressions they learned in class, topics which were dealt with in class, textbook materials, individual and class activities, presentations, and midterm exams. Keeping diaries or journals and then interacting with a teacher can be a good tool not only for students themselves in terms of becoming aware of learner strategies through the writing process, but also for teachers in terms of teaching strategies (Oxford, Lavine, Felkins, Hollaway, & Saleh, 1996).

4. Data Collection and Procedure

(1) Writing in Class

Students wrote in class twice, using desktop computers. Some students said that writing in class was an interesting experience and others said it was hard work. The first topic was “My College Life.” They looked serious while writing and thinking about their experiences. After finishing their second assignment, “My Plans for This Winter Break” and “Why English Writing Is Hard,” for which they were given one hour, they sent their document file to me via E-memo before leaving class. It was the second individual writing task.

(2) Journal Writing

They were encouraged to write and post their journals for a ten week period. Some were eager to post their journals, but several students never participated in the journal writing. I showed and shared students' questions in class using a beam projector and gave students feedback before starting each lecture.

(3) Feedback and Interview

I had casual conversations with students when they were writing on their computers and observed their writing process. Most of them, except for the higher level students, complained that writing in English was very hard. Several students sometimes asked about their writing when I approached them. After printing out all the completed assignments, I read them and gave corrective feedback to all the students. For low-level learners, the
feedback usually focused on basic grammatical errors and misspellings to raise awareness of English language mechanics, and for higher level learners, the feedback emphasized appropriate vocabulary use, grammatical mistakes, and organization of the passages. When giving feedback, I asked them basic questions about their writing, their experiences with writing in English, and their feelings about writing in English. When something curious came up about a student's writing, I called the students and asked them some questions about it, recording the phone call using my smartphone.

5. Data Analysis

I analyzed both writing assignments of the second writing and journals, repeatedly reading and examining their discursive stories to obtain certain patterns and to extract specific themes. I found certain categories in the messages of these texts. I then classified data exclusively and also combined them in similar clusters. To ensure inter-rater reliability, another researcher majoring in Linguistics re-coded the same data in the same manner. She teaches foreigners Korean language and is good at handling learner language data for her research. Cronbach alpha was placed at .956.

IV. FINDINGS

A total of fifty-five out of sixty-nine students offered their opinions on the difficulty of their English writing experiences. Fourteen students provided irrelevant information about the question.

1. Why is English Writing Hard?

The first research question is concerned with the reason why English writing is hard. Four categories and twelve sub-categories emerged through analyzing their discursive stories. As displayed in TABLE 1, the themes are their lack of L2 knowledge, writing experiences, and the anxiety they feel when doing writing tasks. Thirty-two (58%) of their responses stated that they thought they lacked grammar and spelling skills and approximately half of them said that they feel they are grammatically deficient when they write in English.
TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of L2 knowledge</td>
<td>Grammar deficiencies</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary deficiencies</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both grammar and vocabulary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No basic English skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No experience of writing</td>
<td>No writing practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No chance to learn how to write</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not accustomed to writing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No skills for writing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling anxiety</td>
<td>Just hate it / No passion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nervousness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Self-reproach</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difference btw speaking and writing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, students from all levels tended to express they had problems with vocabulary, from the highest level for more communicative expressions to the lowest level for basic literacy. On the other hand, students in the middle seemed to believe they needed grammar skills more than vocabulary. A Chinese student who kept a journal from the start revealed the difficulty of vocabulary learning. A few times I observed that she translated Chinese into English, depending on a Chinese electronic dictionary or web sites. It was her first year of college life in Korea, and sometimes she appeared embarrassed to use Korean in the classroom.

No, I think it is very hard for me. First, the English words which I can remember are quite rare. I feel very embarrassed when I want to write. Something I really want to say but because of unfamiliar words I have to give up. So what I write are very simple, just like a student's composition in middle school. So, as I said it is hard enough for me to write. Second, I always Chinese-English. What is the meaning? In fact, I often say something as the way of Chinese not English. So even though I write the English, the people who is not Chinese don't know the meaning at the most time. (Student 20, English²)

Three students whose English ability was relatively low answered that they did not have basic English language skills. According to Jung-Won Hahn (2006), in a study of college students’ perception of grammar instruction, more than half of the students who participated in the study answered that “grammar is more essential than any other variable within language proficiency” (p. 37).

² All the data provided by students are in their original form. They have some grammatical mistakes because the writing was done without any revision.
Eleven students (20%) seemed to think if they had had the opportunity to write before and if they had learned to write, they would be better at it. Most of them were hard workers who were interested in learning English. They wrote that they felt awkward when they did writing tasks in class and that they needed to learn the writing skills.

It was a interesting try and a chance to think and plan about my future. I think it's hard to write in English because most importantly we (Korean students) don't have chance to learn and use English through English. In many classes we learn and study about English, but rarely use it. No using, applying and actual practicing in speaking or writing. Mostly do listening and reading in just test forms I think. (Student 1, Business)

The student, a freshman who likes funk music, is talking about secondary English education. Whenever I talked with him, he came across as thoughtful. He was logical in answering my questions and analytic in his journal entry reviewing cd-rom content. He said that he had never learned English writing at school and at private institutes. He attended private institutes for five years to study English and Korean essay tests for college entrance exam. Although he did not learn English writing, his writing was good thanks to reading lots of books and studying Korean writing. As one low-level student confessed, "I totally don't know what to do in front of a computer," a number of students seem unaccustomed to writing activities, regardless of their L2 ability.

Six students (10.9%) seemed to be afraid of or hated writing in English. Three male students who had not built a strong foundation in English stated that they hated English.

Writing cannot temperamentally agree with me (Student 14, Public administration)

I hate English. It is very difficult to me...Sometime I think that I have not talent for language.(Student 49, Advertising)

I not had the foundation of the English language (Student 53, Business)

Surprisingly, two attentive students responded negatively, saying that they felt nervous because they worried about making mistakes.

I begin to get interested in tried to writing. I'm little bit nervous and I worry about wrong, so it's little difficult for me. (Student 21, Business)

I don't like speak and write English. Because I'm afraid what I spoke, wrote was correct. (Student 27, Tourism)
In fact, the male student (S21) wrote in his journal every week, and he always started by writing English sentences which summarized what he had learned in class. He also wrote about some ideas about learning language he obtained from his classes. It appeared that he showed some interests in actual language use because he enjoyed traveling abroad over fifteen countries during the break time. However, writing in English might have been a burden with grammatical problems at that time.

Finally, five low level students attributed their poor English ability to laziness. Some used Google translator or were good at surfing the Internet to make the expressions they wanted to make.

This comments won't excuse, there isn't my own effort. (Student 13, Business)
Because I has not studied english. I'm kicking myself for not studying English harder. (Student 35, Spanish)
I regret high school. Because I did not English study. (Student 45, Business)
It's hard to understand. Because, I don't self English study. It's my fault. (Student 52, Business)
I neglect one's studies, 2 I have nothing to be proud of (Student 54, Business)

One girl mentioned the difference between speaking and writing. It seems like that she felt differently when she made oral presentations in class. Overall, the students' thoughts showed that writing in English is a difficult task with diverse reasons behind its difficulty.

2. I Did Enjoy Writing!

In the second question, I asked them about how they feel when they write in English. Many students responded negatively, saying that writing in English is very hard. Those who were positive about writing in English provided a variety of thoughts on writing tasks. They were all students eager to learn English. There were three students who had experience with writing in high school. A freshman wrote:

I like writing so it isn't hard to me. Brain storming is most interesting part to me. Because I'm very creative person. At least I think so. And I hope to many student have interesting about all English part like listening and writing etc. (Student 56, Business)

She had lived abroad when she was young, which is why her pronunciation and intonation were accurate. Her behavior was fairly creative, as she said. She was also interested in
fashion design and psychological testing. She was unique in presenting in English on her lifestyle. She mentioned the importance of teacher feedback in her previous writing experiences.

I have many chance to learn English. But I can't have opportunity to feedback my English ability. I think a teacher to teach the way for a long time should be introduced in English education. (Student 56)

In fact, I have talked with students who did not get any feedback from their teachers after taking tests or submitting assignments. Qi and Lapkin (2001) suggest that relevant feedback is very important in the sense that learners’ incorrect hypotheses and inappropriate generalizations can lead to errors in their written texts. Another girl, shy, asked me about preposition usage. She wrote:

Yes, I did. But, I had some problems. Especially, I feel hard about a preposition. For example, preposition is for, to, of, at and etc. It is difficult to choose one preposition. Also, I feel hard about tence. Especially, i confused perfect tense with basic tence. I feel I need more effort. (Student 57, Journalism)

The sophomore said that she tried writing in college for the first time. In addition, she was taking an English composition course at the same time. This seemed to help her raise her awareness of verb tenses and prepositions. She earned perfect scores on the midterm exam and seemed to be starting to internalize grammatical features through writing activities. She also enjoyed watching sitcom-styled dvds which were accompanied by textbooks.

Other students showed their interests in learning English and provided some ideas about it as well as their own strategies. A freshman working as a student journalist for the school newspaper wrote:

YEAPSOLUTELY! It's a fresh experience to write plans in English. I've already made plans, so it is not difficult to instruct paragraphs. But it is so difficult to write in English. I do not have a timid mind to speak in foreign language. I know these (English, Japanese, Chinese...) are not my mother tongue... I am really short of vocabulary and grammar. So I'm trying to overcome these handicaps of talking (writing) in English. Other languages are too. (Student 58, Culture Content)

She was fluent in expressing her ideas in English, but she acknowledged that writing was
not an easy task even though her grammar skills were good.

A male student who utilized Internet chatting showed his confidence and positive attitude toward learning English. Even though his grammar was not perfect, he was active in developing his interlanguage system by interacting with people from other cultures. As Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman (2011) state, he was using English chatting as a mediational means through social interaction.

Writing is great thing for many aspects. First, writing my thinking makes me calm and motivating new idea. Second, I like English chat. It's not hard as English talk. I don't figure out a word or a expression about something to tell, then I can find it dictionary... Also other aspect of English chat is real-time communication. So I can improve thinking, react quickly; also can know what they frequently say... Nobody blamed my English skill. The important thing is our attitude for English. Why shy? Don't shy. Why be cowed? Don't be cowed. Do you think you should not talk to foreigner if communication in foreigner and you doesn't make? Then How can speech-impaired person live? (Student 59, Advertising)

He enjoyed watching American dramas and talking with English speakers through the Internet. He asked me about the contraction form “ain’t,” possibly because he had run across it in informal language situations. In researching EFL literacy through e-mail exchange with native English speakers, Myung-Hye Huh (2001b) identified that computer-mediated communication could be an effective tool for facilitating students’ literacy development, emphasizing the importance of linguistic form.

One senior whose awareness of English grammar had begun improving revealed her opinions in light of her experience as an EFL learner:

When I wrote something to use English, I used to make same mistake. The writing practice help reduce my mistake. English grammars have different things between Korea grammars. So I think I couldn't understand easier... When I was in New York, grammar is not important to understand each other. When I ask to English speakers, Most Newyorker said to me, grammar is important but your speaking is very good. So grammar is not a problem. And almost native speaker didn't know grammar. So they make a mistake. Even Korean student know more English grammar than native speakers. But In Korea, we have to know grammar exactly to take English test. So I focus on grammar and study hard. (Student 19, Counselling)
Like this student, many college students seemed to recognize “the relationship between language use and conscious knowledge of grammatical system” in terms of form and function. In a sense, they were agreeing that “productive practice of structure” would be indispensable to the learning process (Jung-Won Hahn, 2006).

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study tried to look at college students’ perceptions of English writing practice. When they were asked why English writing was difficult, over half of the students ascribed their poor writing to their lack of L2 knowledge, such as grammatical, syntactic or lexical deficiencies. Among them, over half confessed that they had difficulty with grammar skills. Relatively, lower level students felt that they needed grammar skills more urgently, while higher level students were eager to acquire more sophisticated expressions to broaden their employment of vocabulary. Next, a group of students mentioned the absence of writing experiences due to which they said that writing tasks were unfamiliar because they had not learned to write. Six students revealed their anxiety about writing, such as hatred and worrying overly about mistakes. Last, five students reproached themselves for their poor English abilities.

On the other hand, the students who had an interest in English writing were able to express unique ideas, regardless of their past writing experience. As autonomous learners, they had started to develop their language proficiency. In light of the teachers’ role in empowering reluctant and beginning learners to facilitate their learning, it is necessary to introduce various writing tasks for writing literacy. Even a struggling learner can copy the expressions they learned from textbooks and they can relate their lives to the expressions. Through these writing activities, learners are able to think about themselves and operate mental process. Moreover, the student and the teacher can proceed to “the dynamic assessment” (Poehner, 2009; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011) with their personalized ideas at the feedback stage. As a result, these languaging activities can be a starting point for the learner development in the future. The activities can move from the mechanical aspects of writing (e.g., word recognition, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentences

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3 For example, a beginning learner wrote “I am a soju lover!” as he was guided to write expressions after the students learned the chapter about food. This brought the class laughter.

4 Dynamic assessment refers to a process-oriented form of assessment during which an expert provides cues and questions to mediate the learner towards an independent performance in the future. This future orientation allows the assessor to project development by seeing what the learner can do with help. In contrast, most other assessment procedures measure outcomes of past learning. The focus of dynamic assessment is on process, not on product. That is, it is a means of transforming not knowing into knowing (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011).
and paragraphs) to “purpose of writing,” including language and content (Olshtain, 2001).

In the meantime, some students said that keeping a journal is helpful for becoming more proficient at writing in English. Writing English journal entries seems to be effective for writing practice (Chan-Kyoo Min & Jin Kim, 2005; Olshtain, 2001). It can also enhance students’ attention to grammatical features and the writing process with feedback through interaction. Taking into consideration the unbalanced nature of English education at secondary schools with a lot of constraints, important changes are needed regarding development of new teaching methods, teacher training for writing instruction, and the school testing system with the introduction of NEAT.

Through the English writing practice in college class I could observe that the students tried to solve their difficulties, noticing not only the linguistic form but the meaning while constructing written communication. Many students regardless of their proficiency level said that English writing task was a fresh and good experience to think, though it was hard. Therefore, more output-oriented communicative activities and more affordances for output need to be offered for meaningful and autonomous discovery learning process. For those purposes, classroom productive practice focusing on individual learner would be a stepping stone to real communicative acts through social interaction.

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