

Writing Apprehension and Writing Achievement of Korean EFL College Students

Kyung Ja Kim

(Woosong University)

Kim, Kyung Ja. (2006). Writing apprehension and writing achievement of Korean EFL college students. *English Teaching*, 61(1), 135-154.

The study investigated the relationship between writing apprehension and English writing achievement. A total of 136 college students participated in the study. Data was collected through the Writing Apprehension Test and final course grades of writing classes and subjected to descriptive statistics, factor analysis, reliability coefficients, correlations, MANOVA, and *t*-test to address research questions. The results showed that three factors affect the questionnaire's validity: Negative perception about writing ability, fear of evaluation, and avoidance of writing in English. Overall, Korean college students were highly apprehensive in writing English. Negative perception about the writing ability was the most important component of their writing apprehension. It also found significant correlations between writing apprehension and final course grades. The study provided evidence that self-perception about the writing ability had the strongest relationship with the writing performance. Females were more apprehensive than males. Those who are not interested in taking more advanced writing classes were more apprehensive than the participants in a willingness group. The findings of the study had educational implications for teaching L2 learners to reduce their writing apprehension and to boost self-confidence in writing in English.

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication apprehension¹, test apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation are the situation specific foreign language anxiety that is mainly associated with performance evaluation in academic and social contexts (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). With the situation specific anxiety, second or foreign language (L2) learners at all levels experience frustration and difficulties when asked to write sentences

¹ A distinction between apprehension and anxiety was not made and the two terms represented the same concept in the present study.

or paragraphs in L2. The frustration and difficulties can be a result of negative experiences from instruction and evaluation of writing. The difficulties can be also influenced by both the cognitive factor in writing process such as writer's block (Rose, 1984) and affective factor such as writing apprehension (Lee, 2005). As Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert (1999) reported, writing apprehension is a language skill specific anxiety, which is associated with writing performance. Writing apprehension (WA) refers to, according to Daly and Miller (1975a, 1975b), a person's predisposition to undertake or to avoid writing tasks. Highly apprehensive writers regard writing as unrewarding, even punishing, they consequently tend to avoid, if possible, the writing situations and they feel more than normal amounts of fear and concern when they must write. Low apprehensive individuals, on the other hand, tend not to avoid writing situations, feel confident in their writing abilities, and often enjoy writing. Writers display these apprehensive feelings in the attitudes they express about writing, in the behaviors they show when they write, and in their written products (Faigley, Daly, & Witte, 1981).

Since 1970s, considerable research on the influence of WA on various learning aspects has been conducted with first language writers. Daly and Miller (1975a, 1975b) first developed a questionnaire to assess WA in mainly evaluative situations called Writing Apprehension Test (WAT), which is a self report instrument. The WAT items represented both the positive statements such as enjoyment and confidence in writing and negative statements about fear and avoidance of writing and it has been widely used to determine the relationship of WA to various measures of writing performance. The majority of studies correlated WA with a variety of factors and the results indicated that WA has a negative impact on writing performance and competence (Daly, 1978; Daly & Miller, 1975b; Faigley et al., 1981), the perceived writing intensity of the jobs (Bennett & Rhodes, 1988), willingness to take more writing courses (Daly & Miller, 1975b), attitudes toward writing instruction and writing course grade (Walsh, 1986). WA is also associated with lower scores on standardized tests of writing such as SAT, ACT, and locally developed writing tests (Daly, 1978; Daly & Miller, 1975b). Furthermore, WA can be a critical factor influencing academic and career decisions (Daly & Miller, 1975a; Walsh, 1986) and it has also negatively affected writers' self-esteem or writing confidence and different types of writing productivity (Faigley et al., 1981).

While there has been an abundance of literature on WA with native speakers of English writing in English, little research has appeared on the topic with L2 learners. Using a translated version of the WAT, a few L2 scholars have turned their attention to the potential utility of the WAT for understanding L2 learners' WA. Results of these studies showed that the WAT was a valid and reliable measurement tool for both English as a foreign language (EFL) students' WA (Cheng et al., 1999; Cornwell, 1998; Cornwell & McKay, 1999; Lee, 2001, 2005; Minjong Song, 1998) and English as a second language (ESL) learners'

(Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002; Butler & Mansfield, 1995; Gungle & Taylor, 1989; Masny & Foxall, 1992; Phinney, 1991; Sullivan & Pratt, 1996). However, the literature on the WA on L2 learners' writing performance and other factors has not produced clear results. Hence, there is a need for further empirical research in L2 learning context. Furthermore, no research² has been conducted to provide information how WA affected Korean students' writing performance. Therefore, the goal of this study was to examine the WA shown by Korean college students and its relationship to their writing performance.

L2 writers are often assumed to have more anxiety, to monitor their products more (Krashen, 1982), and to have more negative attitudes toward writing in L2 than first language writers (Phinney, 1991). Studies, however, on WA in L2, as noted earlier, have sometimes reported mixed and confusing results concerning the various effects of the apprehension on L2 learning aspects. Gungle and Taylor (1989) examined WA and its relationship to willingness to take more advanced writing classes. They hypothesized that a negative association exists between WA and the perceived L2 writing requirements in the students' majors. That is, students with high levels of WA perceive the writing requirements of their majors as low, while low apprehensive counterparts perceive as high. They were also concerned with the relationship between WA and students' attention to form and content. Negative and significant correlations between WA and students' willingness to take advance writing courses and between WA and the perceived writing requirement were found, but no significant correlation between WA and concern for form. Even though Gungle and Taylor reported the mixed findings and their adapted version of the WAT may not truly measure the ESL students' level of WA, their study suggested that L2 WA is a real problem among ESL writers (1989). Later, the findings with adult ESL students in Canada replicated Gungle and Taylor's and provided additional results of the effect of WA on L2 writing performance. The higher the WA score, the lower writing achievement score and the greater the attention to writing form, yet the correlations were not significant. Moreover, females were more apprehensive in L2 writing than male counterparts (Masny & Foxall, 1992).

On the other hand, research in EFL context on writing performance and achievement indicated that WA had significant and negative associations with L2 writing course grade (Cheng et al., 1999; Imm, Heng, & Abdullah, 2001; Lee, 2001) and with scores on the Test of Written English (TWE) (Cornwell & McKay, 1999). However, studies also showed high WA negatively affected writing quantity and quality, but the associations were not significant (Cornwell, 1998; Hassan, 2001; Lee, 2005). Unlike the L1 studies, L2 WA studies revealed inconclusive results regarding the relationship between WA and writing performance. It also revealed different findings in terms of the context where each study

² There has been only a study, to my knowledge, on writing apprehension with Korean students, but the study (Minjong Song, 1998) focused on the effect of different writing activities and feedback on students' writing apprehension using the English version of WAT.

conducted. For instance, there was a significant correlation between WA and performance with EFL Taiwanese students, but not with Egyptians. This lack of cross-cultural studies on WA leaves us an incomplete picture of the nature of WA (Cheng et al., 1999). Furthermore, the small to moderate negative associations between scores on the WAT and performance can be due to the fact that a writing performance measurement did not truly assess writing skills (Horwitz et al., 1986).

In the meantime, some researchers attempted comparative studies of two L2 writing environments to examine its influence on WA. However, the findings of the studies have also been far from clear. ESL students using the computer did not show a significant reduction in the WAT by the end of the semester compared with the students writing by hand, although the students began with more apprehension than the native English writers (Phinney, 1991). Sullivan and Pratt (1996) also compared ESL students in between a networked computer-assisted classroom and a traditional oral classroom. The results indicated that there were no significant differences on the WAT scores. Later, an experimental study with Korean college students showed that free writing exercises and communicative feedback on writing products reduced their WA, but not significant (Minjong Song, 1998). Most recently, with an attempt to develop a structural model of various L2 writing constructs, Lee (2005) investigated factors considered to be both inhibiting and facilitative to L2 writing performance and reported that free voluntary reading was the only a negative and significant relationship with WA. That is, none of factors such as free writing and attitudes towards writing instruction were associated with the WA, and no significant causal path relationship was found between the WA and L2 writing performance. Phinney (1991) claimed that the non significance between the WA and performance could be that L2 writers are so apprehensive about their writing that they have already reached their ceiling on the WAT.

Another important issue concerning the WAT as a primary tool for assessing the WA in L2 is the interpretation of scores on the WAT. Although the Daly-Miller's WAT statements represent various aspects of apprehension in writing context, it provides a single score of a person's writing apprehension. A high score indicates a high level of apprehension and a low score low apprehension (Phinney, 1991). Thus, it may not provide a detailed picture of an ESL student's reflection to writing. A study, consequently, was concerned with validating the WAT translated in Japanese, Cornwell and McKay (1999) conducted a factor analysis. Four factors were found and labeled Negative Perceptions about Writing Ability, Enjoyment of Writing, Fear of Evaluation, and Showing One's Writing to Others, respectively. They included the results of percentage of responses to each item, but did not report the level of apprehension on each factor. Even though the study provided the construct validity of the translated WAT in students' L1, the participants have been identified as only either low apprehensives or high apprehensives in the analyses. In the

same vein, Cheng et al. (1999) administered the Chinese version of the WAT³ and conducted an exploratory factor analysis to examine the apprehension constructs underlying the WAT. The results indicated that three factors were selected for the L2 WAT: Low Self-Confidence in Writing English, Aversiveness of Writing in English, and English Writing Evaluation Apprehension. Furthermore, the three subcomponents of the WAT were used in their further analyses. The scores of overall WAT and Low Self-Confidence and English Writing Evaluation Apprehension had significant and negative correlations with English writing course grades, while Aversiveness of Writing in English was not significantly associated with English writing grades. They also reported that Low Self-Confidence in Writing English and English Writing Evaluation Apprehension were the significant predictors of L2 writing course grades.

Given the review of literature, it seems reasonable to assume that WA is a frustrating experience among L2 writers. The literature reported consistently negative associations between WA and writing performance regardless of how writing performance is measured and between WA and students' interest in advanced writing classes. Thus, in order to contribute to the theoretical underpinning of the foundations of L2 apprehension, it is important to examine the WA that Korean college student writers face and its relationship to their writing performance in EFL contexts. In addition, the research on the WA in ESL has the difficulty of generalizing findings across EFL context. This difficulty may be linked in part to the situation specific measure of the WAT in measuring apprehension levels. In spite of the importance, little empirical research has addressed the issue in L2 and even less is known with EFL writers. Moreover, there has been no research that has probed the WA shown by Korean students adopting a Korean version of the WAT and the relationships between the levels of WA and English writing achievement.

The main purpose of this study was to examine whether the WA subcomponents reported in the studies of Cheng et al. and Cornwell and McKay can be found in the EFL context in Korea and to investigate the associations of the WA with English writing achievement. Furthermore, this study aimed to determine the effects of students' gender and willingness to take more advanced writing classes on the levels of their WA. The Daly-Miller's WAT was adopted to measure the participants' WA. It also attempted to assess the Korean version of the instrument's reliability. The following specific research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do Korean college students experience writing apprehension in English?
2. What are the relationships between the writing apprehension and English writing

³ Two items were added to the Daly and Miller's WAT and one item was split into two more specific items. There were, thus 29 items in total.

achievement?

3. How do students' gender and willingness to take more advanced writing classes influence their writing apprehension?

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Participants

The participants of the study were 136 undergraduate students from two universities in Korea. There were more than 136, but five students failed to complete the questionnaires without missing items and they were excluded from the analyses. All the participants, who were learning EFL and have majored in English, were native speakers of Korean and enrolled in an English writing course at the time of participating in the study. They all agreed to participate in the study, to answer the questionnaire, and to release their final course grades of the writing courses. English majors were chosen for the sample because of the fact that only students with a major in English have the opportunity to take an English writing class as an elective or a required course in general. There were 61 males (44.9%) and 75 females (55.1%). The age of the participants, from sophomores to seniors, ranged from 20 to 28 years with a mean of 23.1 and a standard deviation of 2.2. Of the total sample, 57 (41.9%) were sophomores, 62 (45.6%) juniors, and the remaining 17 (12.5%) classified as seniors. There were no first year students in the sample since writing classes can be taken from the sophomore year in the two universities where the data collected. More than half ($N=71$, 52.2%) of the participants have traveled to any English-speaking countries. The participants represented a wide range of English writing proficiency, even though 70 (51.5%) reported their English writing proficiency as medium compared with other students in their writing classes. Eleven (8.1%), however, perceived their level as good, 47 (34.6%) as not good, and 8 (5.9%) as very poor. However, none of them reported it as excellent in the self-assessed writing proficiency.

2. Instruments and Procedures

The instrument used in this study entailed two measures: an adapted WAT and a background information questionnaire. The WAT consisted of twenty-six statements with 5-point Likert scales (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree) for participants to indicate the extent to which the statements applied to themselves. In order to complete the items in students' native language, the WAT without an established Korean version was translated into Korean by English-Korean bilinguals. To increase the validity of the WAT, minor

discrepancies between English and Korean versions were revised until the both versions of the questionnaires were equivalent. The WAT have proved to be a valid and reliable measure for L1 population (Daly & Miller, 1975a, 1975b; Faigley et al., 1981; Fowler & Ross, 1982) and all studies with the WAT in Chinese, Japanese, and English reported Cronbach alphas above .85 (Cheng et al., 1999; Cornwell, 1998; Lee, 2005; Masny & Foxall, 1992). Thus, based on the assumption that the 26 items of the WAT would also be as relevant for L2 students, a simple modification was made on the WAT to correspond to a Korean-specific English learning context. "English" or "in English" was added to each statement to ensure that all 26 statements referred only to a student's use of English instead of Korean (see Appendix).

The second questionnaire was related to participants' background information such as gender, age, year in school, and experience of traveling to English-speaking countries for demographic data. In addition, questions including participants' self-assessed English writing proficiency and their interest in more advanced writing classes were asked. Then both WAT and background information questionnaires were administered during the participants' regular English writing class by either the class instructor or the investigator in the middle of the spring semester in 2005.

To measure participants' English achievement scores, their final course grades were obtained from the writing class instructors at the end of the semester. The participants across three grades were taking one of the following classes: Introduction to writing, Basic academic writing, English writing for business purposes, and Intermediate English composition. The all four courses are assigned 3 credit hours each. The final course grades consisted of midterm and final examinations administered in all the classes, as well as class assignments. The contents of the examinations were similar across classes with a few exceptions, such as sentence completion, error correction, sentence-long and short essay composition, and grammar structures. Writing an opinion paper for Intermediate English composition class and a resume for English writing for business purposes course were assigned to students as take-home midterm exams. The letter grades converted into numbers, for example, 10 was loaded onto A⁺, 9 onto A, 8 onto B⁺, 7 and so forth. All the instructors of the above mentioned writing classes adopted norm referenced evaluation that produces the bell shaped curve in assigning students letter grades. They, accordingly, used the grade distribution scale, for example, a grade A was assigned to 20% of the students in a class, grade B to no more than 50%, and so forth. Therefore, the 136 raw score loadings of the participants were included for the analyses without the standardized procedure within each class.

3. Data Analyses

The WAT in the study had five possible responses ranged from 1 to 5 for each item.

Positively worded items, such as “I have no fear of my English writing being evaluated.” and “It’s easy for me to write good compositions in English.” were reverse scored prior to the calculation of the level of the WA. Therefore, the scoring gives a point ranged from 26 to 130 in total and a higher score indicated a higher degree of WA in English writing. For an analysis of the survey data, descriptive statistics, factor analysis, reliability coefficients, correlation coefficients, MANOVA, and independent samples *t*-test were used. The reliability of the Korean version of the WAT was .87. The relatively high Cronbach alpha on the surveys indicated that participants’ responses were quite consistent across items of the scale and the Korean version of the WAT is internally consistent in measuring L2 writing apprehension.

III. RESULTS

1. To What Extent Do Korean College Students Experience Writing Apprehension in English?

Total scores of 78 out of 130 on the WAT would reflect a neutral response to all the 26 items. Based on the median score 78, scores 78 or below are considered to be low apprehensive, scores of 79 to 99, high apprehensive, and scores above 100, very high apprehensive (Reigstad, 1991, cited in Minjong Song, 1998). In order to examine the level of WA of the participants, responses were summed for each person. The total score ranged from 43 to 114 with a mean score of 82.5 and a standard deviation of 12.8. Accordingly, the participants had a high level of apprehension in writing English. They were nervous about writing and fearful of product evaluation. However, only the classification of the participants as high, moderate, or low in WA may not be enough to provide insights that what WA factors interacted with one another in understanding EFL writing more comprehensively.

To see the components of Korean students’ writing apprehension in English, a factor analysis, a principle component and varimax rotation, an orthogonal rotation method, was used to extract factors. Three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.5 were found and labeled Negative Perception about Writing Ability, Fear of Evaluation, and Avoidance of Writing in English, respectively. The three factors accounted for 49.2% of the total variance. In addition to the results of the three-factor solution, mean and standard deviation for each item are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Three-Factor Solution in English Writing Apprehension

		Loading	M	SD
Factor 1: Negative Perception about Writing Ability				
13	I'm nervous about writing in English.	.77	3.70	.99
16	I never seem to be able to clearly write down my ideas in English.	.76	3.28	1.02
7	My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a composition in English.	.71	3.54	1.08
22	When I hand in an English composition I know I'm going to do poorly.	.66	3.80	.94
26	I'm not good at writing in English.	.65	3.93	.77
24	I don't think I write as well in English as most other people.	.61	3.78	.89
11	I don't feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing in English.	.59	3.83	.89
23	It's not easy for me to write good compositions in English.	.48	4.01	.88
5	Taking an English composition course is a very frightening experience.	.43	2.91	1.10
18	I expect to do poorly in English composition classes even before I enter them.	.38	2.68	1.12
12	I don't like to have my friends read what I have written in English.	.37	3.11	1.01
Factor 2: Fear of Evaluation				
9	I don't enjoy sending my English writing to magazines to be evaluated and published.	.69	3.66	1.02
20	Discussing my English writing with others isn't an enjoyable experience.	.66	2.80	1.08
4	I am afraid of writing essays in English when I know they will be evaluated.	.60	3.23	1.19
6	Turning in a composition written in English to an instructor makes me feel nervous.	.58	2.96	1.03
2	I have fear of my English writing being evaluated.	.51	3.45	1.15
25	I don't like my English composition to be evaluated.	.40	3.07	.98
14	People don't seem to enjoy what I write in English.	.37	3.80	.98
Factor 3: Avoidance of Writing in English				
17	Writing in English isn't fun.	.77	2.73	.98
19	I don't like seeing my thoughts on paper in English.	.69	2.19	.99
3	I don't look forward to writing down my ideas in English.	.68	2.25	.89
10	I don't like to write my ideas down in English.	.60	2.90	1.02
15	I don't enjoy writing in English.	.43	3.41	1.03
1	I avoid writing in English.	.37	2.96	.98

Positively worded statements in the table, for example “I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing in English.” were rephrased negatively to show that a

high mean score indicated a high degree of WA in English writing in the table. Two items were excluded from all further analyses for some reasons. Item 21 loaded on three factors simultaneously at the loading of less than .40, which is often regarded as a critical value in the factor analysis, with a loading of .28, .30 and .31. Furthermore, Item 8, “Expressing ideas through writing in English seems to be a waste of time.” produced the lowest mean score ($M=1.46$) with the lowest standard deviation ($SD=.71$) of the 26 items, meaning that English writing practices are beneficial and required for all the English major students who were the participants for this study. Moreover, only Item 8 loaded on the fourth component as a separate factor with a loading of .68. Thus, this item did not seem to be relevant to measurement of the participants’ WA, and consequently items 8 and 21 were excluded.

All the items for the first factor, Negative Perception about Writing Ability, which accounted for 22.3% indicate students’ negative self-perception, low confidence in English writing ability, and the influence of low confidence in their English writing experience. The mean scores on the items for Factor 1 were relatively higher than those for other factors. The second factor for the WA, Fear of Evaluation contained 7 items that reflect students’ apprehension of evaluation of their English writing and it accounted for 15.9% of the total variance. The third factor that accounted for 11%, show the degree to which the participants enjoy writing in English with 6 items.

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics for Three-Factor Solution

	Mean	SD	Alpha	Rank Order
Negative perception about writing ability	3.50	.56	.78	1
Fear of evaluation	3.28	.66	.73	2
Avoidance of writing in English	2.74	.65	.74	3
Overall* WA	3.25	.52	.88	

*Items 8 and 21 were excluded in the calculations.

In order to determine the level of Korean students’ WA, the mean of the three factors were directly compared. The results of the descriptive statistics including Cronbach Alphas appeared in Table 2. As expected in the factor analysis, the study revealed that Korean students were highly apprehensive because they negatively perceived their English writing ability. The students believed that they are anxious since they are not good at writing in English ($M=3.93$). The score on Factor 1 was even higher than the overall WA score ($M=3.25$). Of the 26 items, the highest mean (Item 23, $M=4.01$) was also self-derogation about writing ability-related item. The next most strongly displayed WA was Fear of Evaluation ($M=3.28$) showing nearly an equal mean score to the overall WA. The participants didn’t like to show their writing to others ($M=3.80$) and to send the writing to magazine to be evaluated ($M=3.66$). However, the majority of the participants showed

relatively low scores on Avoidance of Writing in English indicating that writing classes are unavoidable subjects for the English majors, which ranked third with a mean of 2.74.

2. What Are the Relationship between the Writing Apprehension and English Writing Achievement?

As an initial step to answer research question two, descriptive statistics related to the participants' English writing achievement scores were calculated. The loadings ranged from 2 (F) to 10 (A+) were used to convert letter grades into numbers. Of the 136 participants, 34 (25%) received A+ or A, 49 (36%) B+ or B, 35 (25.7%) C+ or C, and the 18 (13.2%) received D+ or lower grades. The overall mean score of the converted letter grades was 7.28 with a standard deviation of 2.14.

As a second step, the Pearson correlation coefficients were computed for English writing achievement and the three apprehension factors including the overall WA to determine the degree of interrelatedness among variables in the study, as summarized in Table 3. The relationships among the three WA factors in addition to the overall WA showed high significant correlations in all positive directions, ranged from .46 to .88, meaning that they represented conceptually related with one another, but still distinct from each other even though each factor did not harm the measurement of WA in English. In regard to the relationship between WA and English writing performance, all the three factor solutions were correlated with the participants' English writing achievement in all negative directions ranging from the smallest being -.11 to the largest being -.33 indicating that the higher the students' level of WA, the more likely they are to get low grades. Furthermore, these associations were statistically significant except for the relationship between Fear of Evaluation and the writing achievement ($r=-.11, p=.18$). Negative Perception about Writing Ability was the most highly associated with English writing achievement than any other factors although the magnitude of the relationship was small ($r=-.33, p<.001$). Not surprisingly, the significant and negative relationship between the overall WA and English writing achievement ($r=-.28$) reached the .001 level.

TABLE 3
Intercorrelations between English Achievement and Writing Apprehension Factors

	English Achievement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1	-.33**			
Factor 2	-.11	.68**		
Factor 3	-.19*	.46**	.52**	
Overall WA	-.28**	.88**	.87**	.73**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

3. How Do Students' Gender and Willingness to Take More Advanced Writing Classes Influence Their Writing Apprehension?

The data indicated some differences in relationships between participants' groups and their WA. Table 4 presents means and standard deviations for male and female groups on the five variables investigated in the present study. Scores on English achievement (ranged from 2 to 10) and those on WA (5-point Likert) had different baseline scales. Thus, to make comparisons directly with these two different scales, the standardized scores of all the variables were included in the table. Each score represents how much above or below the overall mean for each variable. A MANOVA for all the variables indicated significant gender differences with an $F(1, 134)=2.82$ at $p<.05$. As illustrated in the table, however, the t -tests between two groups yielded the different results. Females had higher mean scores on Factors 1, 2, 3 and overall WA. Overall, female students experienced more apprehension ($M=.20$) than male counterparts ($M=-.25$). More specifically, females self-evaluated their English writing ability more negatively ($M=.11$), they felt more anxious about evaluation of their writing ($M=.24$), and they less enjoyed writing in English ($M=.17$) than males. The differences in Factor 3 and the overall WA were statistically significant at $p<.05$ ($t=-2.16$ and $t=-2.58$ respectively), while the difference in Factor 2 was significant at $p<.01$ ($t=-3.16$). In contrast, males had slightly higher scores on English writing achievement than female students, but it was not significant ($t=.28, p=.77$).

TABLE 4
Means and Standard Deviations of WA and Achievement by Gender

	Male (N=61)		Female (N=75)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Achievement	.03	.95	-.02	1.04
Factor 1	-.14	1.02	.11	.97
Factor 2**	-.29	1.01	.24	.93
Factor 3*	-.20	1.12	.17	.86
Overall WA*	-.25	1.05	.20	.91

* $p <.05$, ** $p <.01$ in the t -tests.

TABLE 5
Means and Standard Deviations of WA and Achievement by Willingness to Take a Course

	Willingness (N=79)		Unwillingness (N=57)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Achievement	.06	1.00	-.09	1.00
Factor 1**	-.19	1.01	.26	.93
Factor 2	-.14	1.01	.19	.95
Factor 3**	-.22	1.07	.30	.80
Overall WA**	-.21	1.01	.30	.90

* $p <.05$, ** $p <.01$ in the t -tests.

With regard to the willingness to take a more advanced writing class, 79 (58.1%) participants showed desire to enroll, while the remaining 57 students did not show an interest in an advanced writing class. As reported in Table 5, the participants in a Willingness group had lower mean scores on all the three WA factors and the overall WA, whereas they slightly outperformed Unwillingness counterparts in English writing achievement. As a whole, the participants in an Unwillingness group reflected more WA ($M=.30$) than those in Willingness ($M=-.21$). On closer investigation, the Unwillingness participants showed lower confidence in writing English ($M=.26$), they had more fear of evaluation ($M=.19$) and tendencies to avoid English writing situations ($M=.30$). Furthermore, the significant group difference was found in the MANOVA for all the variables with an $F(1, 134)=2.93$ at $p<.05$. Like the results on the gender differences, the different results produced in the t -tests. The differences in Factors 1 and 3 and the overall WA were statistically significant at $p<.01$ ($t=7.03$, $t=9.48$, and $t=9.13$, respectively), while the difference in Factor 2 was not significant ($t=3.71$, $p=.06$). Furthermore, there was no significant differences in the participants' writing achievement ($t=.71$, $p=.40$) based on their interest in advanced writing classes.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study was designed to investigate Korean college students' WA in English with relation to the writing achievement. The three factor solutions indicated that Korean student writers in English suffered from negative self-perception about writing proficiency, apprehension of evaluation of their writing products, and negative feelings about writing situations. The items that represented each WA component for the present study were slightly different from Chinese students by Cheng et al. (1999) and Japanese ones by Cornwell and McKay (1999), a slight rearrangement of the items, however, was indispensable because of different cultural and educational backgrounds of the participants. Therefore, it can be said that the WA pattern of the present study is the same as the ones by Cheng et al. and Cornwell and McKay. Furthermore, given the evidence that the internal consistency reliability for the total items was satisfactory and that for each set of factor items were considered to be adequate, the results of the study offered additional endorsement that the Korean version of the WAT is a valid and reliable tool for measuring Korean college students' writing apprehension in English.

The study showed that the students experience high apprehension in English writing classes regardless of their gender and willingness to take more advanced writing classes. A majority of them regarded negative self-perception about writing ability as the first factor of their WA ($r=.88$, $p<.001$). The participants' low self-confidence in English writing was also reported in the analysis of the background information questionnaire. Of the 136

participants, 55 (40.5%) perceived their English writing proficiency as not good or very poor. These findings of the study endorse the ones of previous research that indicated a relationship between negative self-perception of writing ability and writing anxiety (Cheng et al., 1999). This also reflected the English learning context in Korea. Most students have experienced English writing very little in their secondary school education. In college, students spend considerable time on preparing for TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), which is a primary indicator of English proficiency for many business sectors in Korea, because they recognize the importance of English for their career advancement at the end of college (Kyung Ja Kim, 2004). Nonetheless, no writing tests are involved in the TOEIC. While students concentrate efforts on attaining higher proficiency levels in TOEIC, they seem to put aside the importance of English writing. Consequently, they have not experienced English writing practices sufficiently enough to develop an adequate level of writing proficiency. Instead, they underestimate their writing ability and have negative beliefs in their writing performance. In fact, none of them perceived their writing proficiency as excellent, even though 34 students (25%) received a grade of A in their actual grades in writing classes.

In accordance with many other research findings in both L1 and L2 (Cheng et al., 1999; Cornwell & McKay, 1999; Daly, 1978; Daly & Miller, 1975b; Faigley et al., 1981; Imm, Heng, & Abdullah, 2001; Lee, 2001; Masny & Foxall, 1992), the participants' WA was found to be negatively related to their achievement. The present study, thus, provides a support to the view that low apprehensive writers scored significantly better than high apprehensives on writing performance tests. Such a relationship is also consistent with Gardner and MacIntyre's claim that the best single association with achievement is language anxiety among affective variables (1993), and the findings that yielded a significant correlation L2 class anxiety and written production (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Furthermore, the present study also supplies empirical evidence to the issue that there is negative correlation between L2 anxiety and students' achievement (Aida, 1994; Cheng et al., 1999; Horwitz et al., 1986; Sung-Yeon Kim, 2000).

On the other hand, the findings of the present study contrast with some of earlier studies with EFL students that indicated insignificant correlations between the WA and the writing performance, such as final course grades, TWE, and writing quality and quantity (Cornwell, 1998; Hassan, 2001; Lee, 2005). In addition, the present study did not support Cheng et al.'s findings that reported a significant and negative relationship between students' English writing evaluation apprehension and writing course grades. Even though the factor solution of the present study indicated that the fear of evaluation is an important factor of WA in English, which explained 15.9% of the total variance, it was not significantly related to students' writing achievement. Moreover, Aida (1994) considered the fear of negative evaluation as the most important factor of L2 anxiety that plays a significant role

in the association with performance ($r=-.38$, $p<.01$), while it appears unclear conceptually as both speech anxiety and fear of evaluation loaded on the same factor. Therefore, more research is needed to examine the relationships among the variables used in the present study and to gain a better understanding of L2 writing apprehension.

Another notable finding is that the participants' negative perception about writing ability had the strongest relation to their writing achievement, even though the results of the correlations do not imply the causal claims about the relationship. In light of findings by self-efficacy researchers concerning apprehension and competence in L2 writing, students' self-confidence in their writing capabilities is significantly related to their writing performance (Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1994). That is, the higher students' beliefs about their own writing skills, the more likely they are to receive high grades on the writing classes. Accordingly, students with negative expectation about composition ability, feel apprehension in writing situations, thereby avoid the writing tasks, and are in turn likely to get low grades. This finding is in line with the claim concerning the influence of self-efficacy beliefs on writing achievement and this relationship also confirms previous finding reported by Cheng et al. (1999).

In the meantime, the relatively low mean scores on the items of avoidance of writing in English factor can be explained by the characteristics of the sample in the present study. All the participants were English majors. They recognize English writing as a compulsory subject for them, so that they have no chances to avoid it under any circumstances. Instead, they may be familiar with some terms used in writing classes, such as writing process, business writing, life-story writing, and writing skills. Although they did not enjoy writing in English (Item 15, $M=3.41$), they did not avoid writing in English either (Item 1, $M=2.96$). Their awareness of the English writing as the required class did not involve aversive feelings toward writing in English. However, the significant and negative association between students' avoidance of English writing and achievement suggests that the students' aversive feelings towards situations requiring writing have harmful influences on themselves, for example, reducing opportunities for writing practice that is crucial to the improvement of writing proficiency, thus, they would probably produce low grades ultimately.

Research question three dealt with the relationship between WA and students' demographic data. The students' WA patterns differed in terms of their gender and willingness to take an advanced writing class. As a whole, the female students had a significantly higher level of apprehension and they performed lower on the writing achievement than the males. This finding appears to have been supported in the L2 writing literature (Masny & Foxall, 1992); however, it contradicts that of Daly and Miller (1975b) in L1 study, which found that males were more apprehensive than females. They attributed the females' low apprehension to the explanation that they receive more positive teacher

feedback on their writing than males. More recently, Aida (1994) reported that there was no significant gender difference in the level of language anxiety in Japanese learning ($t=.41$, $p=.69$). Due to the paucity of research on the issue, gender differences of the nature of WA remain unanswered questions. With respect to the willingness to take additional writing courses, the students in an unwillingness group are more likely to be apprehensive in English writing, to have negative perception about their writing skills, and to avoid the writing tasks. These findings from this study replicate the previous ones (Daly & Miller, 1975b; Gungle & Taylor, 1989; Masny & Foxall, 1992), and extend the findings to Korean college students in the EFL context.

Given the research findings, it is reasonable to epitomize that WA in English works negatively with achievement of students, thus assessment of students' WA can provide writing instructors with important practical implications. In order to minimize WA, Reeves (1997) recommends the student-centered classroom in which writing instructors should pay as much attention to students' perception about their writing ability and encourage positive self-talk to build their sense of confidence in writing. As apprehension influences phases of writing, the instructors are encouraged to evaluate both performance and the accompanying apprehension level as part of regular writing assessments in a supportive instructional environment, highlighting the claim that learners must gain confidence in themselves as writers if they are to improve the writing skills (Pajares & Johnson, 1994). L2 research in writing provides evidence that grammar correction harms students' motivation, attitude, self-confidence, and apprehension (Kasper & Petrello, 1996; Truscott, 1996). Instead, the use of writing journals, learning logs, and essays or creating of content-based process writing classroom, may promote students' self-reflection over writing tasks and themselves as writers (Blanton, 1987; Jong-Bai Hwang, 2002). For example, a semantic map for brainstorming and organizing ideas is useful for L2 learners to overcome WA (Webster, 1998). Furthermore, in a friendly, supportive classroom context, students could manage WA, and gradually, they may feel confident in writing in English. This practice ultimately leads students to improve their L2 writing competency.

For theoretical insights the present study provides evidence for the role and importance of writing apprehension in writing achievement in L2, the study, however, has limitations. First of all, the participants were only those who have majored in English. Thus, WA may play a different role in different EFL contexts for different groups of students. Secondly, it is difficult to determine if the participants' English writing achievement scores were assessed with a reliable and valid measure because their final course grades resulted from the different exams across classes and school years. Therefore, it appears unclear if the learning contents of each writing course, the questions of the exam, and students' school years might affect their writing performance. Lastly, the causal relationships between WA and achievement were not investigated in the present study due to the nature of correlation

analysis that no causality is assumed, thus, significant unmeasured variables may cause the level of WA and writing performance.

In relation to the limitation, it is necessary to replicate the findings on the WA in the present study with EFL learners of writing in various learning contexts. More examination of unidentified relationships between WA and writing competence, for example, whether WA develops first or it follows writing competence, they emerge at the same time, or they interact with each other, is needed to determine the causal relationships. Furthermore, with regard to writing achievement, studies on the interactions between WA (affective factor) and writer's block (cognitive factor) and between WA and other learner characteristics such as self-esteem, motivation, and self-efficacy remain to be researched. In the light of Cheng et al.'s study (1999), further investigation about the link between WA and other language-related apprehension such as listening, reading, and speaking anxiety is advisable to gain a better understanding of the nature of apprehension in learning L2.

REFERENCES

- Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: The case of students of Japanese. *Modern Language Journal*, 78(2), 155-168.
- Argaman, O., & Abu-Rabia, S. (2002). The influence of language anxiety on English reading and writing tasks among native Hebrew speakers. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 15(2), 143-160.
- Bennett, K., & Rhodes, S. C. (1988). Writing apprehension and writing intensity in business and industry. *Journal of Business Communication*, 25(1), 25-39.
- Blanton, L. L. (1987). Reshaping ESL students' perceptions of writing. *ELT Journal*, 41(2), 112-118.
- Butler, S., & Mansfield, E. A. (1995). Lifewriting in a secondary school. *English Quarterly*, 28(1), 12-17.
- Cheng, Y., Horwitz, E. K., & Schallert, D. L. (1999). Language anxiety: Differentiating writing and speaking components. *Language Learning*, 49(3), 417-446.
- Cornwell, S. (1998). Group membership and writing apprehension: Do they affect academic writing? *Oaka Jogakuin Junior College Kiyo*, 28, 193-204.
- Cornwell, S., & McKay, T. (1999). *Measuring writing apprehension in Japan*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Japan Association of Language Teachers, Maebashi, Japan.
- Daly, J. A. (1978). Writing apprehension and writing competency. *Journal of Educational Research*, 72(1), 10-14.

- Daly, J. A., & Miller, M. (1975a). The empirical development of an instrument to measure writing apprehension. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 9(3), 242-249.
- Daly, J. A., & Miller, M. (1975b). Further studies in writing apprehension: SAT scores, success expectations, willingness to take advanced courses, and sex differences. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 9(3), 250-256.
- Faigley, L., Daly, J. A., & Witte, S. P. (1981). The role of writing apprehension in writing performance and competence. *Journal of Educational Research*, 75(1), 16-21.
- Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1993). On the measurement of affective variables in second language learning. *Language Learning*, 43(2), 157-194.
- Gungle, B. W., & Taylor, V. T. (1989). Writing apprehension and second language writers. In D. Johnson & D. Roen (Eds.), *Richness in writing: Empowering ESL students* (pp. 235-248). New York: Longman.
- Hassan, B. A. (2001). *The relationship of writing apprehension and self-esteem to the writing quality and quantity of EFL university students*. Pamietta, Egypt: Mansoura University, College of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 459 671)
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. A. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.
- Hwang, Jong-Bai. (2002). L2 learners' anxiety and motivation in an English-only content-based class. *English Teaching*, 57(1), 193-211.
- Imm, L. G., Heng, C. S., & Abdullah, A. N. (2001). *Writing development: Adult language learners' affective reactions and performance*. Paper presented at the Second International Literacy Conference, Penang, Malaysia.
- Kasper, L. F., & Petrello, B. A. (1996). Responding to ESL student writing: The value of a nonjudgmental approach. *Community Review*, 14, 5-12.
- Kim, Kyung Ja. (2004). The relationship between motivation and intercultural sensitivity in English achievement. *English Teaching*, 59(4), 97-120.
- Kim, Sung-Yeon. (2000). A study on language learning anxiety and goal orientation: Their relationship across different classroom contexts. *English Teaching*, 55(1), 23-46.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. New York: Pergamon.
- Lee, S. (2001, November). *The relationship of writing apprehension to the revision process and topic preference: A student perspective*. Paper presented at the Tenth International Symposium on English Teaching, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Lee, S. (2005). Facilitating and inhibiting factors in English as a foreign language writing performance: A model testing with structural equation modeling. *Language Learning*, 55(2), 335-374.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: A review of the literature. *Language Learning*, 41(1), 85-117.

- Masny, D., & Foxall, J. (1992). *Writing apprehension in L2*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 352 844)
- Pajares, F. (2003). Self-efficacy beliefs, motivation, and achievement in writing: A review of the literature. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 19(2), 139-158.
- Pajares, F., & Johnson, M. J. (1994). Confidence and competence in writing: The role of self-efficacy, outcome expectancy, and apprehension. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 28(3), 313-331.
- Phinney, M. (1991). Word processing and writing apprehension in first and second language writers. *Computers and composition*, 9(1), 65-82.
- Reeves, L. L. (1997). Minimizing writing apprehension in the learner-centered classroom. *English Journal*, 86(6), 38-45.
- Rose, M. (1984). *Writer's block: The cognitive dimension*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Song, Minjong. (1998). *Experimental study of the effect of controlled vs. free writing and different feedback types on writing quality and writing apprehension of EFL college students*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 423 703)
- Sullivan, N., & Pratt, E. (1996). A comparative study of two ESL writing environments: A computer-assisted classroom and a traditional oral classroom. *System*, 24(4), 491-501.
- Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning*, 46(2), 327-369.
- Walsh, S. M. (1986, March). *New directions in research on writing apprehension*. Paper presented at the L. Ramon Veal Seminar of the National Council of Teachers of English Conference, Phoenix, AZ.
- Webster, J. P. (1998). Semantic maps. *TESOL Journal*, 7(5), 42-43.

APPENDIX

English Writing Apprehension Test

1. I avoid writing in English.
2. I have no fear of my English writing being evaluated.
3. I look forward to writing down my ideas in English.
4. I am afraid of writing essays in English when I know they will be evaluated.
5. Taking an English composition course is a very frightening experience.
6. Turning in a composition written in English to an instructor makes me feel good.
7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a composition in English.
8. Expressing ideas through writing in English seems to be a waste of time.
9. I would enjoy submitting my English writing to magazines for evaluation and publication.

10. I like to write my ideas down in English.
11. I feel confident in my ability to express clearly my ideas in writing in English.
12. I like to have my friends read what I have written in English.
13. I'm nervous about writing in English.
14. People seem to enjoy what I write in English.
15. I enjoy writing in English.
16. I never seem to be able to write my ideas clearly in English.
17. Writing in English is a lot of fun.
18. I expect to do poorly in English composition classes even before I enter them.
19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper in English.
20. Discussing my English writing with others is an enjoyable experience.
21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in an English composition course.
22. When I hand in an English composition I know I'm going to do poorly.
23. It's easy for me to write good compositions in English.
24. I don't think I write as well in English as most other people.
25. I don't like my English compositions to be evaluated.
26. I'm not good at writing in English.

Applicable levels: college students

Key words: writing apprehension, achievement, gender, willingness to take a writing course

Kyung Ja Kim
Dept. of English Language Communication
Woosong University
17-2, Jayang-dong, Dong-gu
Daejeon 300-718, Korea
Tel: (042) 637-9428 / H.P.: 011-751-3778
Email: kyung19@woosong.ac.kr

Received in November, 2005

Reviewed in December, 2005

Revised version received in February, 2006