

## **An Investigation of Secondary English Teachers' Perceptions of Writing Instruction\***

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Second language writing research has been grown as a distinct field of inquiry. Foreign language writing research, however, has featured less prominent in theoretical or pedagogical discussion. The purpose of the study was to investigate secondary English teachers' views on writing instruction and practices of teaching writing in EFL contexts. In this study, secondary school teachers of English who attended teachers' training programs as part of the required in-service training participated. They were asked to write a short reflection on previous writing experience and also to answer the questionnaire. Several obstacles in teaching writing in an English classroom were identified such as teachers' low interests in writing, no urgent needs of teaching writing in curricular, relatively low confidence of teaching English writing, and limited teacher training programs on writing instruction. Most teachers perceived a writing skill as an essential and indispensable language skill in an English class but reported that more resources on writing instruction need to be available to English teachers. We need to assist teachers to acquire the relevant professional expertise required for writing instruction and also should develop pre- and in-service training programs focused on writing instruction.

[writing instruction/teacher education/글쓰기지도/교사교육]

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Second language writing research has been grown as a distinct field of inquiry. This growth in research has been expanded to the analysis of texts and investigation of writing as a cultural activity (Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996;

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Connor, 2003; Kroll, 2003; Leki, 1992; Matsuda, 2001; Matsuda & De Pew, 2002; Silva & Brice, 2004; Zamel, 1983; Zhang, 1995). However, most research on second language writing has focused on teaching writing in English as a second language (ESL) contexts. Research on foreign language (EFL) writing has been less prominent in theoretical or pedagogical discussion (Manchón & Haan, 2008; Matsuda & De Pew, 2002; Ortega, 2004; Silva & Brice, 2004). According to Ortega (2004), second language writing is "heavily ESL-oriented" (p. 3) and this can "diminish the capacity of L2 writing as a field to produce theoretically robust knowledge" (p. 8). Therefore, we need to investigate various issues or challenges of teaching writing in EFL contexts. The steady growth of the research on EFL writing can promote pedagogical discussion to enhance pedagogy applicable in EFL contexts.

## II. BACKGROUND

Some second language writing researchers have attempted to investigate English-language writing instruction in EFL contexts (e.g., Allaei & Connor, 1990; Alfred, 1997; Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Brock & Walters, 1993; Chew, 2005; Clachar, 2000; Connor, 1996; Jackson, Meyer, & Parkinson, 2006; Dong-ju Lee, 2007; Kyong-lim Lee, 2006; Yu-Ra Park, 2007; Eunsook Shim, 2001; Eun-Mi Yang, 2007). The researchers have described the teaching of EFL writing in various settings and emphasized the role of contextual factors in shaping L2 writing instruction. For example, difficulties in implementing process pedagogy in China are derived from differences between Chinese and Western cultures, conflicts between linear thinking and multidimensional thinking, and the gap between theory and practice (Zhan, 2004, cited in You, 2004).

Some difficulties of teaching writing in particular EFL contexts, as Leki (2001) puts it, can be coping with large class size, accommodating local needs, and dealing with teachers' lack of experience teaching L2 writing and with students' lack of instruction in L1 writing. In addition, teaching writing in EFL contexts can involve ideological challenges such as the need to justify the large investments required for teaching EFL writing, the need to explain students the important role of English-language writing in their lives, and the need to make English-language writing instruction enhance students' ideas.

According to Reichelt (2005), English-language writing teachers in Poland can face the pressure to prepare students for the writing sections of national exams.

Other obstacles in Poland were reported to be a lack of L1 and L2 writing instruction and the dominant use of writing teachers from English-dominant countries. You (2004) suggested that English teachers in China may confront several obstacles, including disjunction between classroom instruction and the national exams, students' test-driven learning styles, or their relatively low English proficiency. In terms of writing assessment, high school teachers and students in China tend to neglect the communicative elements of writing in real-life situations and devote excessive attention to the testing situation and the assumed preferences of the test-paper raters (Qi, 2004, cited in You, 2004). Other challenges of teaching writing in EFL contexts appear to be teachers' and students' lack of awareness on the importance of writing skills in the contexts, no writing exam required, and no urgent necessity to improve writing skills (Kwon, Yoshida, Watanabe, Negishi, & Nagamura, 2004). The teacher's limited training in writing instruction is likely to be another factor to neglect the element of writing in classroom (Hirvela & Belcher, 2007).

According to Kwon et al. (2004), Korean high school students showed significantly lower scores on writing test compared to Japanese and Chinese students. They attempted to explain the results by no writing exams in college entrance exam (CSAT) and by students' lack of awareness on the importance of writing skills in EFL contexts. Jimin Kahng (2006) found that most elementary and middle school students have least interests in English writing and did not consider writing as an important area to study compared to other language skills such as speaking, listening, and reading.

Yu-Ra Park (2007) investigated the conditions of teaching and learning English writing at Korean high schools. She surveyed 56 teachers and 69 high school students regarding their experience and interest in English writing. She found that teachers do not teach writing as much as other language skills of English. Regarding this neglect of writing instruction in an English class, she attempted to explain the reasons by students' low interests in writing and no active involvement in writing activities. In order to encourage students to get involved in writing, as she suggested, teachers should provide students more interesting writing materials and activities such as newspaper cartoons or small group activities.

In the same vein, Dong-ju Lee (2007) interviewed 11 secondary school teachers regarding the teachers' practices of writing instruction and assessment in the classroom, views on writing, evaluation of students' writing abilities, and challenges in teaching of writing. The study revealed a size of class, discrepancies between practices in writing instruction and the national curriculum, no urgent demand on

writing skills, and a lack of teachers' pedagogic competence and confidence in the teaching of writing. Some Korean teachers may not have systematic writing instruction from elementary school to now and may not learn effective pedagogical knowledge on writing instruction. Although the national curriculum states that grade 11 students are required to write well-organized passages and to express their arguments logically, most teachers may not be trained how to teach writing to meet these goals. Teacher training programs and administrative actions were suggested to encourage a teacher to teach writing in an English class.

Some researchers have examined how teacher educators can assist writing teachers engage writing instruction more effectively. Coxhead and Byrd (2007) have developed the web-based resources to empower teacher educators to address the lexical and grammatical dimensions of writing instruction. By developing resources such as complete lexical tutor, teacher educators can assist current and future teachers in making effective decisions in their teaching writing (Coxhead & Byrd, 2007).

It is not surprising that English teachers in Korea are facing great challenges in teaching writing. The place of writing instruction in a classroom remains unclear for many teachers and they may not be fully prepared to teach writing effectively. Unfortunately, writing teacher education is still "an underdeveloped, sometimes misinformed, and often invisible field deserving of much greater attention than it currently receive" (Hirvela & Belcher, 2007, p. 128). Therefore, few resources have been produced to assist pre- and in-service teachers to become experts in the field (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005).

When writing teachers encounter curricular decisions about which approaches or materials should be used to teach writing, they are required to make decisions based on the prior training or the needs of their students in their own educational settings (Vandrick, 2003). There is an urgent need that writing teachers are able to implement most effective pedagogical strategies to create successful writing classroom experiences for their students (Cumming, 2003). We need to pay more attention to examine how pre- and in-service writing teachers education can address the needs of preparing teachers to teach writing (Hirvela & Belcher, 2007). The teacher training programs can inform teachers theoretical and pedagogical information that can be applicable in their classes.

The aim of this study is to investigate Korean secondary English teachers' views on writing instruction and practices of teaching writing and to identify their needs and wants of writing instruction.

### III. METHODS

#### 1. Subjects

Table 1 shows the characteristics of participants. Secondary school teachers of English participated in the study, who were attending teachers' training workshops as parts of the required in-service training. The total of 80 teachers answered the questionnaire but two of them did not complete the survey and their questionnaires were excluded in this study.

Table 1  
*Characteristics of Participants (N=78)*

Characteristics	N	%	
Gender	<i>Female</i>	46	59%
	<i>Male</i>	32	41%
Age	<i>20~29</i>	14	18%
	<i>30~39</i>	22	28%
	<i>40~49</i>	24	32%
	<i>over 50</i>	17	22%
Years of teaching	<i>1~5</i>	35	45%
	<i>6~10</i>	4	5%
	<i>11~15</i>	8	10%
	<i>over 16</i>	31	40%
Grade of teaching	<i>Middle school</i>	34	42%
	<i>High school</i>	44	58%
Average students in English class	<i>1~30</i>	21	27%
	<i>31~50</i>	57	73%
Average teaching hours	<i>1~15</i>	8	10%
	<i>16~30</i>	68	90%
Previous formal instruction on <i>Korean</i> writing	<i>Yes</i>	13	16.7%
	<i>No</i>	60	76.9%
	<i>Neither</i>	5	6.4%
Previous formal instruction on <i>English</i> writing	<i>Yes</i>	33	42.3%
	<i>No</i>	42	53.9%
	<i>Neither</i>	3	3.8%
No. of teacher training workshops in teaching writing attended	<i>None</i>	54	70%
	<i>Once</i>	17	22%
	<i>Twice</i>	4	5%
	<i>More than 3</i>	3	3%

Forty six of the participants were female and 32 were male teachers. Thirty four

of the teachers (42%) were in general middle schools and 44 teachers were in high schools (58%). Most teachers had teaching experience of less than five years (45%) and over 16 years of experience (40%). Average students in an English class were over 30 and less than 50 students. Most teachers' teaching hours were between 16 to 30 hours per week. In terms of formal writing instruction in school education, most teachers responded that they did not receive any formal instructions in Korean (77%) or in English writing (54%). Furthermore, they have little experience of attending pre- or in-service training programs for writing instruction (70%) and only a few teachers attended one or three-day workshops once or twice in previous years.

## 2. Data Collection and Analysis

The participants were asked to write a short self-reflection on their previous experience of writing in order to gather the participants' perception on writing in general. They were asked to write about writing experience in schools and also any classes of Korean or English writing that they took in the past years.

In addition to the self-reflection writing task, a questionnaire was distributed to the participants. The questionnaire, partly adapted and modified from Reichelt (2005) and Yu-Ra Park (2007), was composed of the teachers' demographic information such as age, gender, teaching experience, or teachers' views on writing instruction. Question items were also concerning their current practices of teaching writing in their own classroom and teachers' needs and expectations about writing instruction workshops in teacher training programs (See Appendix).

The questionnaire was written and administered in Korean. The Likert-type items were designed and teachers were asked to answer each question using a five-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' They were informed that all responses were anonymous.

## 3. Limitation of the Study

Questionnaire can provide an important means of obtaining information and be able to generalize the results. However, one limitation of this method is the problems of making questions without understanding the specific contexts. This also needs to administrate to a large number of teachers.

One of limitations in the present study is that a small number of teachers participated and the results from the small population of teachers can limit the

generalization of the results. Another limitation is that the teachers' perception can not be described and explained only with the use of numeric data analysis. Therefore, more qualitative approaches need to be conducted to fully understand teachers' views on teaching English writing.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### 1. Teachers' Perception on Writing

As shown in Table 2, only two English teachers appeared to enjoy writing in English (2.6%) and most teachers did not prefer to write in English (58%). In terms of writing in Korean, most teachers were unfavorable about writing in Korean (48%). Regarding the importance of writing, most emphasized the role of writing as an important communication tool. Especially, English writing skill is perceived as a crucial skill by English teachers (80%).

Table 2

*Teachers' Perception on Writing (N=78)*

Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree N(%)	Disagree N(%)	Neutral N(%)	Agree N(%)	Strongly Agree N(%)
1. Enjoy writing in Korean	7(9)	30(38.5)	23(29.5)	15(19.2)	3(3.8)
2. Enjoy writing in English	17(21.8)	28(35.9)	31(39.7)	1(1.3)	1(1.3)
3. Korean writing skill is important in communication	0(0.0)	1(1.3)	17(21.8)	40(51.3)	20(25.6)
4. English writing skill is important in communication	0(0.0)	3(3.8)	13(16.7)	47(60.3)	15(19.2)
5. Be confident to teach English writing	8(10.3)	29(37.2)	29(37.2)	11(14.1)	1(1.3)

In addition to the importance of writing, teachers were asked to answer whether they would be confident in teaching writing in a classroom. Unfortunately, only 15% of the English teachers reported that they are confident in teaching English

writing.

In their reflections, most teachers commented that they conducted writing only for homeworks or assessments. Instead of producing a writing for an enjoyment, they were often asked to write for evaluations or tests.

I don't like writing. Every vacation, writing a diary (in Korean) was one of my homeworks. (Park)

I really hated to do those kind of things (writing a diary), but I had to do (it), not to be punished by my teacher. That experience made me think that (a) composition is a sort of burden on me. (Jin)

When I write things in English, I always concentrate on the grammar of English. I cannot think of myself. English composition is only assignment, not comfort to me. (Lee)

In this study, most teachers reported they received little formal writing instruction in a school education (77% in Korean; 54% in English) and most English writing was produced mainly in order to practice a particular grammar feature such as progressive tense. The accurate use of the grammar was mostly valued, rather than rhetorical or discourse aspects of writing skills.

In the case of English writing, I've never taken writing instruction until high school. English teachers taught (us) grammar, structure, and vocabulary and they made us practice those kind(s) of things. (Choi)

I took an English writing of native English professor. In that class, I wrote English essays... But I'm afraid that they were focused on grammatical errors too much (Kim)

These findings suggested that most teachers were not favorable in writing in general but they believed a writing to be a critical skill in communication.

I don't have any L2 writing training regularly. I agree writing is (an) essential skill to give my thinking to other people, but I don't have many chances to practice it. (Lee)

Teachers in this study reported that they are not confident in teaching English writing. This can be explained by the teachers' unpleasant experience in writing and a lack of writing instruction in L1 and L2. This lack of L1 and L2 writing instruction may lead to a lack of confidence of teaching writing and to an avoidance of teaching writing in an English class.

## 2. Place of Writing in Curricula

As shown in Table 3, most focused language skill in the current curricula was reported to be '*reading*' (80.8%). The other skills such as '*speaking*', '*listening*', and '*grammar*' were less dominantly instructed in English classrooms. Figure 1 shows that reading is the most focused area but writing is the least focused language skill in an English classroom.

Table 3

*English Language Skills in Current Classroom (N=78)*

Questionnaire Items	Reading N(%)	Writing N(%)	Speaking N(%)	Listening N(%)	Grammar N(%)
6. Most focused area of teaching in classroom	63(80.8)	1(1.3)	5(6.4)	4(5.1)	5(6.4)
7. Most difficult area of teaching in classroom	0(0.0)	48(61.5)	23(29.5)	3(3.8)	4(5.1)

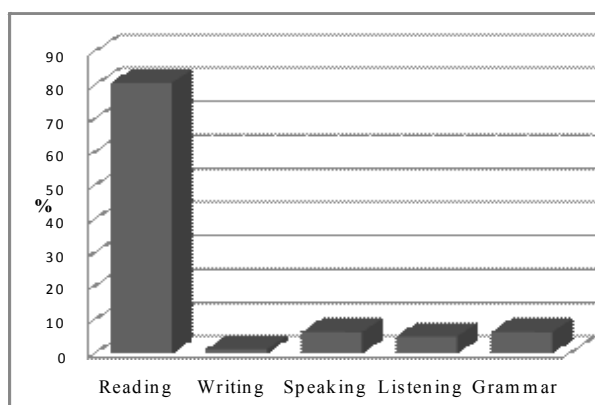


Figure 1. Most focused language skill in current curricula.

As shown in Figure 2, most teachers in this study perceived 'writing' as the most challenging language skill in teaching English. It was reported that 'Reading' was the most focused language skill and also the least challenging teaching area. It can be possibly explained by a teacher's lack of experience in teaching L2 writing.

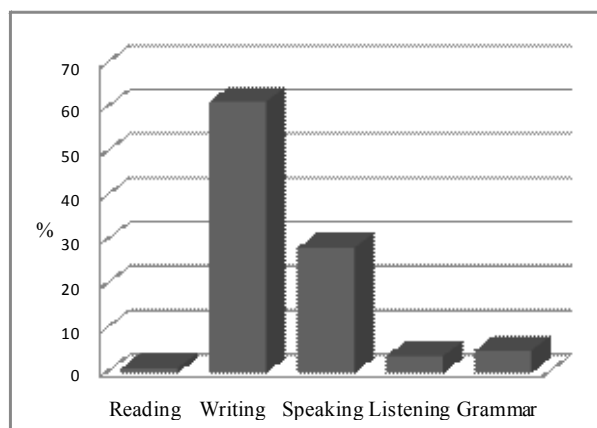


Figure 2. Most difficult language skill in current curricula.

Although 'writing' is perceived to be a critical skill for communication, it is reported to be the most difficult skill of teaching English. Some reasons that a teacher tends to avoid of teaching writing in classroom can be no writing section in national English-language exams and the lack of developed traditions of Korean and English writing instruction.

Different from ESL contexts, a writing can be the most frequently used communication tool in EFL contexts. Most business tasks can be completed via email or letters and academic work can be exchanged in forms of genres such as research articles or a book. Considering the importance of writing in EFL contexts, teachers need to devote more time in teaching 'writing'.

Interestingly, teachers in the study appeared to believe 'writing' to be an important skill in learning English but tended to avoid of teaching 'writing' in classroom. Most teachers reported that more emphasis on writing instruction in current curricular should be put in the classroom (76%) as shown in Table 4.

As Leki (2001) puts it, teaching EFL writing can involve ideological challenges including the need to justify the large investments required for teaching EFL writing, or the need for dialog with students regarding the role of English-language writing in their lives. Some students may have least interests in

English writing and did not consider writing as an important area to study compared to other language skills such as speaking, listening, and reading.

Table 4

*Perceived Necessity of Writing Instruction in Curricula (N=78)*

Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree N(%)	Disagree N(%)	Neutral N(%)	Agree N(%)	Strongly Agree N(%)
8. Perceived necessity to teach writing in a classroom	0(0.0)	6(7.7)	26(33.3)	37(47.4)	9(11.5)
9. Perceived necessity to emphasize writing in a classroom	1(1.3)	6(7.7)	12(15.4)	49(62.8)	10(12.8)

English teachers in Korea could encounter more challenges due to a lack of time to give feedback on students' writing, and teachers' lack of confidence in English writing, a lack of teachers' English proficiency, low levels of students' interest and motivation (Yanghee Kim & Jiyoung Kim, 2005). Proper teacher training programs should be developed and implemented in order to improve teachers' English proficiency (Joo-Kyung Park, 2004).

### 3. Demands on Writing Teacher Education Programs

As shown in Table 5, when teachers were asked whether more teacher training workshops on writing instruction need to be provided, more than 77% of teachers reported more training programs need to be developed and offered to teachers.

Table 5

*Demand on Teacher Training Programs in Writing Instruction (N=78)*

Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree N(%)	Disagree N(%)	Neutral N(%)	Agree N(%)	Strongly Agree N(%)
10. Demand on teacher training programs in writing instruction	1(1.3)	4(5.1)	13(16.7)	37(47.4)	23(29.5)

Although a writing is an essential and indispensable skill and the important component in teaching English, English teachers seem to avoid of teaching

'writing' in their classrooms. This may be due to a lack of theoretical content knowledge or pedagogical strategies. Simply, the teachers may not know how to teach writing or what to teach in an English class. As shown in Figure 3, most teachers in this study agreed that more teacher training programs in writing instruction need to be provided.

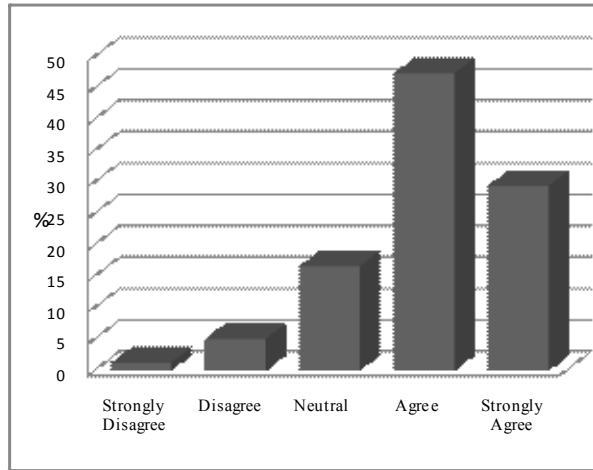


Figure 3. Demand on teacher training programs in writing instruction.

Writing teachers may face curricular decisions about which approaches, methods, or materials should be used to teach writing. The teachers may be required to explore most effective “curricular possibilities and make decisions based on the prior training or the needs of their students in their own educational settings” (Vandrick, 2003, p. 263). Therefore, we need to focus more of our attention on the needs of preparing English writing teachers to teach writing.

## V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to investigate Korean secondary English teachers' perceptions on writing instruction and practices of teaching writing. Several obstacles were identified including teachers' low interests and motivation in writing, teachers' relatively low confidence of teaching English writing, no urgent needs of teaching writing in curricular, and a teacher's limited training for writing

instruction. It is not surprising that English teachers in Korea are facing great challenges in teaching writing. Teacher training programmes can be suggested to encourage a teacher to teach writing in an English class.

We need to heighten the nature of English writing teacher education and to focus more on the needs of preparing English teachers to teach writing. In addition, we need to have an ongoing dialogue with teachers regarding the role of English-language writing and the communicative elements of writing in real-life situation. The lack of teachers' confidence in teaching writing could possibly lead to an avoidance of teaching writing in a classroom. However, this avoidance may not be because "English proficiency are not sufficiently good to practice writing in the classroom" (Dong-ju Lee, 2007, p. 60), but rather teacher training programs or resources on writing instruction may not be sufficiently available to the teachers. Well-developed training programs for writing instruction could assist writing teachers to create most effective and successful pedagogical strategies for their students (Cumming, 2003).

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APPENDIX

설문지 문항

1. 성별	① 여자 ② 남자
2. 나이	① 20~29세 ② 30~39세 ③ 40~49세 ④ 50~59세이상
3. 영어교사 근무경력	① 1~5년 ② 6~10년 ③ 11~15년 ④ 16년이상
4. 담당학년	① 중1 ② 중2 ③ 중3 ④ 고1 ⑤ 고2 ⑥ 고3
5. 학급당 평균 학생수	① 20명이하 ② 21-30명 ③ 31-40명 ④ 41-50명
6. 담당수업시간(주당)	① 10시간이내 ② 11~15시간 ③ 16~20시간 ④ 20시간이상
7. 한국어글쓰기교육	① 있다 ② 없다 [수업명:_____]
8. 영어글쓰기교육	① 있다 ② 없다 [수업명:_____]
9. '영어쓰기' 연수경험	① 1일이내 ② 1-3일 ③ 4-7일 ④ 1주일이상

☞ 밑줄 친 부분에 V표시를 해주세요.

① strongly disagree ② disagree ③ neutral ④ agree ⑤ strongly agree
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- 나는 평소 '한국어'로 글 쓰는 것을 좋아한다.  
① \_\_\_\_\_ ② \_\_\_\_\_ ③ \_\_\_\_\_ ④ \_\_\_\_\_ ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_
- 나는 평소 '영어'로 글 쓰는 것을 좋아한다.  
① \_\_\_\_\_ ② \_\_\_\_\_ ③ \_\_\_\_\_ ④ \_\_\_\_\_ ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_
- 나는 평소 '한국어 글쓰기'가 중요하다고 생각한다.  
① \_\_\_\_\_ ② \_\_\_\_\_ ③ \_\_\_\_\_ ④ \_\_\_\_\_ ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_
- 나는 평소 '영어 글쓰기'가 중요하다고 생각한다.  
① \_\_\_\_\_ ② \_\_\_\_\_ ③ \_\_\_\_\_ ④ \_\_\_\_\_ ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_
- 나는 학생들에게 영어 쓰기 지도를 할 '자신감'이 있다.  
① \_\_\_\_\_ ② \_\_\_\_\_ ③ \_\_\_\_\_ ④ \_\_\_\_\_ ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_

6. 현재 영어 수업에서 가장 주안점을 두고 있는 영어기능은 무엇인가요?  
 ① 읽기\_\_\_\_ ② 쓰기\_\_\_\_ ③ 말하기\_\_\_\_ ④ 듣기\_\_\_\_ ⑤ 문법\_\_\_\_
7. 현재 영어 수업에서 가장 가르치기 어려운 영어기능은 무엇인가요?  
 ① 읽기\_\_\_\_ ② 쓰기\_\_\_\_ ③ 말하기\_\_\_\_ ④ 듣기\_\_\_\_ ⑤ 문법\_\_\_\_
8. 나는 영어 수업에서 '쓰기 지도'가 매우 중요하다고 생각한다.  
 ① \_\_\_\_\_ ② \_\_\_\_\_ ③ \_\_\_\_\_ ④ \_\_\_\_\_ ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_
9. 나는 현 교육과정에 영어 쓰기를 좀 더 강조해야 할 필요성을 느낀다.  
 ① \_\_\_\_\_ ② \_\_\_\_\_ ③ \_\_\_\_\_ ④ \_\_\_\_\_ ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_
10. 교사연수 프로그램에서 '영어쓰기' 강좌를 제공하는 것이 중요하다고 생각한다.  
 ① \_\_\_\_\_ ② \_\_\_\_\_ ③ \_\_\_\_\_ ④ \_\_\_\_\_ ⑤ \_\_\_\_\_

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