

## A Study of Students' Reactions to Writing Activities in English Composition Classes

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The purpose of this study was to demonstrate what kinds of writing activities were performed and to investigate students' reactions to writing activities done in English composition classes at a university. The main method of collecting data was by conducting surveys including closed and open-ended questions. Closed questions were analyzed quantitatively, and open-ended questions were qualitatively analyzed to see students' insightful and deeper understanding of writing activities. From the data analysis, the study found three main categories: reactions to activities in the textbook; reactions to pair or group activities; and reactions to feedback. The study showed the students' positive responses to the writing activities that resulted in successful learning environments. Thus, it is suggested that the multiple activities utilized in this study are good models that writing teachers can apply in their future writing class.

[English composition activities/approaches to writing/collaborative learning/feedback/영작문 활동/쓰기 접근법/협동학습/피드백]

### I. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of globalization, English education in Korea has become an important issue with a widespread focus on English writing. Writing instruction has become an indispensable part of English education in Korea since foreign language ability as one of the core competencies that are expected to acquire from the university education has been stressed. Thus, many universities have provided English writing classes as core liberal arts courses (Gyeong Hee Lee, Hyuk Hong Kwon, Jeong Rye Lee & Sung Jin Lee, 2010).

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Despite the emphasis on English writing, most students are better at learning receptive skills such as listening and reading than productive skills such as speaking and writing (Helgesen, 2003). To understand perceptions on writing, 170 students were asked to answer to a few questions as the pilot study for this research. Among the students, only 9 students (5.9%) of the participant students mentioned that they had confidence in writing. 149 students (85%) had more confidence in receptive skills. However, 164 students (97%) recognized the importance of English writing and 136 students (80%) have been interested in writing in English. The students revealed that learning English writing plays an important role in multiple reasons. They included assisting them to learn other skills (such as speaking, grammar, and vocabulary) by writing, and providing opportunity for career after graduation. They also thought that learning English writing let them improve writing scores on the standardized tests (such as TOEFL and TOEIC), and helped express themselves in communication.

With the importance and interest of English writing, research on writing class is valued to help university students effectively learn how to write in English. Thus, the purposes of this study are to investigate what kinds of writing activities are delivered in English composition classes, and also to examine students' reactions to a variety of writing activities, such as brainstorming writing, sample writing, pair or group writing, and feedback, in English composition classes at a university. By examining their reactions to those writing activities, effective English writing instruction, which is essential in enhancing students' interests and their self-confidence, will be suggested. In addition, this study will consider the importance of collaboration in learning, multiple processes in writing, and feedback on students' writing.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Approaches to Writing

Two basic models of writing have dominated approaches to writing in the language classroom. Traditionally, the teaching of writing has been language focused, emphasizing correctness. This model of writing can be defined as the product approach. In this model, writing had been taught, measured, and assessed based on the product (Bright, 1995; Solley, 2000). Writing is more responsible and committed as it involves a product available for feedback. Silva (1990) stated that "writing is basically a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns. Learning to writing, then, involves becoming skilled in identifying, internalizing, and executing these patterns" (p. 14).

In recent years, the second model of writing is based on the study of how, rather than what, writers write. Emig (1977) viewed writing “as a unique language process” in that it is learned behavior and an artificial process. This is defined as the process approach. The writing process movement began with the landmark work of Emig (1971), who found that writers engage in various thinking processes as they write. Writing is a thinking process that proceeds in cycles and that recycles through subprocesses, such as planning, translating, and reviewing. Kroll (2001) stated that “student writers engage in their writing tasks through a cyclical approach rather than through a single-shot approach” (p. 220). That is, the process writing serves “to encourage brainstorming, drafting, writing, feedback, revising, and editing in a cyclical fashion... it is the learning of a series of skills leading to that product” (Sokolik, 2003, p. 96).

Murray (1997) observed that writing occurs within a community of students in the classroom, where the teacher and students participate in learning and teaching through writing. He mentioned that there are three components of writing process. The first one is prewriting, which is everything including thinking that takes place before the writing. The second one is writing, which means the act of producing a first draft, and the last one is rewriting, which is reconsideration of subject, form and audience. Similarly, Bright (1995) remarked that writers move through the stages of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. In prewriting, students as writers develop and organize ideas for writing. Drafting implies writing something down on paper, which is then processed by revising. In editing, the mechanics are checked and corrected, and finally, publishing is the sharing of work with others. Here, teachers need to help students think about and solve problems through logical reasoning when they compose a piece of work (Flower & Hayes, 1997; National Writing Project & Nagin, 2003; Passman & McKnight, 2007).

Other than two basic models of writing, a genre orientation to writing instruction was drawn on the theory of systematic functional linguistics originally developed by Halliday, arguing that “we have developed very specific ways of using language to accomplish our goals, which means that texts are related to social contexts and other texts” (cited in Hyland, 2003, p. 19). In other words, genres are defined as socially recognized ways of using language for particular purposes. From the perspectives of genre approach to writing, “the writer is seen as having certain goals and intentions, certain relationships to his or her readers, and certain information to convey, and the forms of a text are resources used to accomplish these” (Hyland, 2003, p. 18).

## 2. Collaborative Writing

Collaborative grouping of students is one of the most important elements of English education including writing instruction. Generally, cooperative learning encourages the

active participation of students because small groups provide more opportunities to communicate in a more comfortable environment. There are several ways to form collaborative groups, such as pairs, small groups, or whole groups. Some groups can be student-oriented and informal, and others can be structured more for cooperative processes (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005).

In particular, collaborative writing is commonly employed in English composition classes. Bright (1995) mentioned that collaborative writing is a good example of effective writing approach. Storch (2005) explored how cooperative writing operated in class and found that pairs produced better compositions “in terms of task fulfillment, grammatical accuracy, and complexity” (p. 153). Besides, the participating students in the research had positive attitudes toward the pair activities. Furthermore, Chan-Kyoo Min and Bo-Kyeong Kim (2006) investigated the efficiency of collaborative learning in English composition classes in high schools. They found that collaborative learning was an effective writing approach to motivate students' interests. Yanghee Kim's study (2010), which investigated how the university students in an English composition class utilized process-oriented writing to develop their writing skills, found that completing writing was not just accomplished alone by the students, but in collaboration with others.

However, there might be some negative effects of collaborative group writing. For example, there can be workload differences and interpersonal conflicts in writing among students in the groups. Therefore, when implementing group writing, teachers need to consider the group to be developmentally appropriate, to encourage interdependence among students in the groups, and to motivate the students to work together (Herrera & Murray, 2005).

### 3. Feedback on Students' Writing

Although most students want feedback on their writings, it is not always the best method of teaching writing (Sokolik, 2003). There have been different opinions about the effects of the feedback on student compositions. For example, Truscott (1996) had considerable opposition to the use of feedback and maintained its abolition in writing class. On the other hand, Ferris (1999, 2004) argued that feedback had a marked effect on compositions. Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) explored the effects of different types of feedback and found students' enhanced accuracy in their compositions using feedback.

Although various forms of feedback are presently in use, there are largely two kinds of feedback in writing classes: teacher feedback and peer feedback. First, Yanghee Kim (2010) mentioned that teachers' feedback on students' writing has recently gained importance in English writing. Cheongsook Chin (2007) explored how Korean students perceived teachers' feedback on their writing. The participant students in Cheongsook

Chin's study (2007) stated that teacher's feedback improved their English writing skills "because it helped them apprehend what to improve or avoid in the future, acquire better usage, and correct their errors" (p. 16). Studies (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 1997; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Mijin Joo & Yanghee Kim, 2010; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997) found that most changes students made in response to teacher commentary have a positive impact on their revised texts. Therefore, teachers need to make feedback meaningful and useful through various forms such as individual conference, typed summary comments, or taped responses. To further help, teachers can provide summary responses that instruct students to find their problems and correct them by themselves (Sokolik, 2003).

For peer feedback, both teachers and students might doubt its impact on students' compositions. Sometimes, peer feedback has been considered by the participants as less beneficial than the teacher's feedback. Some students are feared to be made fun of their limited writing ability and some students do not trust their peers' capabilities to correct the writing (Leki, 1991; Mendoca & Johnson, 1994; Rollinson, 2005; Zhang, 1995). However, Rollinson (2005) observed that through proper training peer feedback can be helpful. He mentioned that "training students in peer response leads to better revisions and overall improvements in writing quality, and teacher and peer feedback is best seen as complementary" (p. 24). That is, Rollinson argued that peer feedback can be a very worthy writing process by organizing adequate procedures and training students. Boram Kim (2009) also stated that appropriate training is a positive influence on the peer feedback activity. According to her research, after training, the participant students made more revisions based on their peer comments, and the quality of the revisions was improved.

As shown in literature review, the studies have been conducted on approaches to writing, collaborative writing, and feedback on students' writing product respectively; however, not many studies have been done to examine students' reactions to their activities they did in the English composition classes at a university. Thus, the findings of the current study will contribute to writing teachers by looking at which activities work for students or which activities do not. This study will suggest various ways of motivating students during the classroom activities.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized mostly quantitative methods by asking students closed questions, and qualitative methods were also used by asking them open-ended questions to examine the students' ideas and opinions on writing activities that led to suggestions and implications for the future writing classes.

## 1. Research Questions

The research questions for the current study are: 1) what writing activities do the teachers deliver for students' English writing learning? and 2) what are the students' reactions to these writing activities? The purpose of the first question was to show the possible activity types that might be applied in English composition classes; and the purpose of the second question was to understand the students' reactions to these activities performed in their classes.

## 2. Participants and Textbook

The participants in this study were the university students (at B University in Busan) enrolled in English composition classes (as one of the elective courses) in Korea. Teacher A taught Classes 1, 2, and 3, and 100 students in total were enrolled. Teacher B taught Classes 4 and 5, 70 students in sum.

Table 1

### *Participant Information*

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3		Class 4	Class 5
Teacher A	English (n=27)	Chemistry (n=36)	Mechanics (n=37)	Teacher B	Mixed Majors (n=35)	Mixed Majors (n=35)
	Subtotal: n=100 (F: 49/ M: 51)				Subtotal: n=70 (F: 41/ M: 29)	
	Total: n=170					

Most of these students have not taken an English composition class before, indicating they have not had an opportunity to learn how to write in English. In the question about their level of proficiency in writing, 58 students evaluated themselves as middle level, 38 students as low level, and the rest as high level. Because of numerous participants in this study, each student was numbered for convenience.

The two teachers were the part-time instructors who earned doctoral degrees in the US and had many years teaching experience at universities. Both teachers used the same textbook, *Writing from Within Intro*, which was required by the university where they were teaching. The textbook contains 12 different topics. Each chapter includes pre-writing activity (such as brainstorming), grammar point, example writing, and in-class writing. Other than these activities in the textbook, the classes covered many other activities created by the teachers (including writing a news article, designing a guidebook, sharing ideas before the actual writing, and so forth). The activities such as writing a seal, writing a news article, creating a comic book, and designing a guidebook were performed by pairs or

groups. When the students shared ideas about their writing, both languages were allowed. Most of the students tried to speak English in discussion; however, most of the time, Korean and English were mixed. For the group project for designing a guidebook as an assignment, the students were asked to design a guidebook to introduce the place they chose and then they presented their guidebooks to the whole class. The students were asked to present their work in English, but Korean was allowed when necessary.

### 3. Data Collection

To answer the research questions, data was collected by conducting surveys including closed and open-ended questions. Data collection was accomplished in the fall semester of 2009. Surveys were distributed in the classrooms, and the participants were asked to fill out the survey questions provided. Survey questions were designed based on the activities either in the textbook or created by the teachers to understand the students' reactions to class activities done in English composition classes. Surveys included the questions asking students' general information, and also the questions about writing activities in the textbook, pair or group activities that the teachers asked them to complete, and feedback. All of the surveys were returned.

### 4. Data Analysis

170 surveys from five different classes were gathered, and then the two researchers read the students' reactions to the activities done in their writing classes. 13 questions for the activities given or applied from the textbook, 10 questions for pair or group activities, and 12 questions for feedback were respectively analyzed. These three sections led to three main categories in the findings. Reactions to each question were quantitatively counted so that the study results were drawn.

For the open-ended questions, the students' written comments and opinions were typed and then they were qualitatively analyzed. The purpose of the open-ended questions was to see a deeper understanding of the participants' reactions to the activities. For a qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). Thematic analysis (Shank, 2002) was used, searching for the categories. To identify categories within the raw data, coding entailed reading the data and assigning codes or short descriptions that identified topics from a fine level of detail. From the thematic analysis, the major categories for each question were derived. The tables (3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10) were the examples. The questions 5, 10, 12 in Table 2, the questions 3, 4, 10 in Table 5, and the question 2 in Table 9 were analyzed to search for the categories. The students' written opinions played an important role in producing a more insightful and deeper study

and increasing external validity and reliability by quoting from the participants and describing in detail how I collected the data, derived categories, and made decisions throughout the inquiry.

#### IV. FINDINGS

In this section, the findings of data analysis (three main categories) are presented, including the activities given in the textbook, pair or group activities, and feedback. Four different scales (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) in the surveys were used. The section “other thoughts” in Tables 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 indicates students’ reactions that were not related to research questions and also no responses.

##### 1. Reactions to Writing Activities in the Textbook

13 questions were asked to investigate the students' reactions to the activities in the textbook (including general questions about the textbook). Among the 13 questions, four questions were open-ended, and from these open-ended questions, the study could draw the students' ideas and opinions. Unlike other questions, there are three different sub-questions under the question number seven. The reasons are that throughout the semester, both instructors in this study acknowledged that the students stressed on grammar in their writing so we wanted to gain an understanding of the students’ opinions on grammar in writing. Table 2 shows the results of the surveys. Questions 3, 5, 10, and 12 were qualitatively analyzed based on the participants’ comments.

Table 2

*Evaluations of Activities Presented in the Textbook*

Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Did the topics given in the textbook help you easily write?	21(12.5%)	139(81.7%)	10(5.8%)	0%
2. Did the topics given make you interested and motivated to write?	13(7.6%)	121(71.2%)	36(21.2%)	0%
3. What kinds of topics (other than topics in the textbook) would like to write about?				
4. Did brainstorming activities help your idea development in writing?	40(23.5%)	108(63.5%)	23(13.5%)	0%
5. Why did the brainstorming activity help you develop your idea in writing? (see Table 3)				
6. Were prewriting activities helpful for your writing?	34(20%)	119(70%)	17(10%)	0%

7. Did grammar explanations and practices in the textbook help your writing development?	24(14.1%)	116(68.2%)	30(17.7%)	0%
7-1. Were handouts for grammar instruction that teachers prepared helpful?	25(14.7%)	133(78.2%)	12(7.1%)	0%
7-2. Does grammar play an important role in writing?	70(41.1%)	89(52.4%)	11(6.5%)	0%
7-3. Should grammar learning be integrated in writing classes?	41(24.1%)	103(60.6%)	26(15.3%)	0%
8. Was the instruction about organization in writing helpful for your further writing?	28(16.5%)	118(69.4%)	24(14.1%)	0%
9. Were example writings for each topic helpful for your writing development?	64(37.6%)	101(59.4%)	5(3%)	0%
10. Why were example writings helpful for your extensive writing? (see Table 4)				
11. Were discussions with your partner before the actual writing helpful for your writing?	3(1.8%)	82(48.2%)	85(50%)	0%
12. If discussions with your partner before the actual writing were helpful, why? If not, why not?				
13. Overall, were you satisfied with the activities given in the textbook?	17(10%)	136(80%)	17(10%)	0%

160 students (94.2%) thought topics in the textbook helped them easily develop their writing, and also 134 students (78.8%) revealed topics they dealt with were interesting and gave them motivation to further write in English. However, the students believed that the textbook should include more diverse topics to encourage them to write. The topics they wanted to write about contain daily lives (family, hobby, talents, special events), media (celebrities, updated movies, music, sports), and other topics such as book review, American cultures, current news articles, travel, and free-selected topics. The findings showed that the students would like to share about their personal lives and write about more varied topics, telling that writing teachers should be aware of the suggested topics and try to utilize those topics for the future teaching.

In a question of whether brainstorming activity helped their idea development, 148 students (87%) recounted that they strongly agreed or agreed with brainstorming before the actual writing. 153 students (90%) thought that this kind of pre-writing activity was helpful for their writing development. The table illustrates the students' responses regarding whether the pre-writing activity was helpful (responses to Question 5 in Table 2).

Table 3

*Students' Reactions to Brainstorming*

Categories from the students' comments	n (%)
1. Brainstorming helped organize our thoughts before writing.	53(31.2%)
2. Brainstorming made us develop content structure easier.	40(23.5%)
3. Brainstorming helped overall writing organization.	28(16.5%)
4. Brainstorming provided resources for writing development.	21(12.4%)
5. Brainstorming reduced anxiety of writing.	20(11.8%)
6. Other thoughts.	8(4.7%)

As shown in Yanghee Kim (2010), brainstorming activity can help the students prepare for and complement intensive writing (i.e., drafting and revising format writing assignments); allowing for extensive writing for discovery both in class and out (Zamel, 1985). This activity promotes production of texts that address the tasks, audiences, and genres at hand (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Kroll, 2001).

140 participants (82.3%) responded that grammar explanations and practices in the textbook helped their writing development. 159 students (93.5%) answered that grammar played an important role in student's English writing. Both grammar practices and teachers' supplementary handouts for grammar instruction were very helpful for their writing development. 114 students (84.7%) revealed that grammar teaching should be integrated with writing instruction, which both teachers agreed. However, both researchers believe that first of all, the purpose of writing class should be mainly focused on helping students freely express their ideas and opinions in logical and organized ways, and teaching grammar should be added as supplementary. Because of the survey results about grammar, we were both curious about how the students define the purposes or objectives of writing classes. The results displayed a variety of objectives of writing classes; however, most of the students described that learning English writing is considered as a tool to improve English abilities in general and it helps improve speaking abilities. For example, student 22 recounted, "The objective of writing is making sentences using proper grammar" and student 33 said, "Writing is one of the factors that I can improve my English." Not many students believed that writing is a way of expressing themselves.

Instruction about how to organize the content of brainstorming was also helpful for the students to develop their ideas and organize their thoughts. 146 students (86%) revealed positive reactions to the teaching on paragraph organization—topic sentence, supporting ideas, and concluding sentences. They presented satisfaction with reading example writings; for example, 165 students (97%) recounted example writings for each topic was useful for their further writing development. In a question why it is helpful, the student's responses were varied. Table 4 depicts their reactions to reading example writings

(reactions to Question 10 in Table 2).

Table 4

*Reactions to Example Writings*

Categories from the students' comments	n (%)
1. It provided references for our own writing.	45(26.5%)
2. It helped us look at the flow of content and paragraph structure.	43(25.2%)
3. It helped us learn grammatical rules and vocabulary related to each topic.	38(22.4%)
4. It provided guidelines when we did not have ideas how to develop their own writing.	22(12.9%)
5. It helped reduce anxiety before the further writing.	14(8.2%)
6. Other thoughts.	8(4.7%)

When looking at the results, instruction about how to organize the content and reading example writings for each topic are strongly recommended for the writing teachers.

Another activity that the classes had done was discussions with other peers before individual student began writing their own (Responses to Question 11 in Table 2). The teachers' intended purposes of this kind of activity were allowing the students to integrate spoken language with written language and also letting them exchange ideas and plans for further writing development of a schema. However, 85 students (50%) thought this kind of pair activity was not helpful for their writing, meaning that compared to other types of activities, this task was not popular. Unpopularity of discussions with other peers was driven from the fact that most of this task was conducted at the beginning of the semester when the students were not familiar with the patterns of class activities and they did not know their peers well. In a question why discussions before the intensive writing were helpful or not, the students' opinions were varied (reactions to Question 12 in Table 2):

It depends on the partner, meaning that some are very active, but some are very inactive.  
(Student 90)

It can't be effective because we don't know each other well so we are reluctant to speak.  
(Student 7)

It was helpful because I could know what other students think about the topics.  
(Student 97)

In an affirmative way, they could learn from each other during the discussions; on the other hand, the nature of peers and familiarity with the class played an important role in a successful and effective learning. Overall, 153 students (90%) recounted they were very satisfied with the activities given in the textbook, indicating that textbook choice is also an important element for a successful learning.

## 2. Reactions to Pair or Group Writing Activities

In the following section, the students' reactions to pair or group writing activities are provided, and Table 5 illustrates the questions given in the surveys and the students' responses. The questions 3, 4, and 10 were qualitatively analyzed based on the students' comments.

Table 5  
*Questions and Responses to the Pair or Group Activities*

Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Was writing a seal with your pair helpful for your writing?	27(15.9%)	116(68.2%)	27(15.9%)	0%
2. Were compositions of a news article in Korean with your group helpful for your further writing?	22(13%)	85(50%)	63(37%)	0%
3. Why was creating a seal with your partner helpful or why not? (see Table 6)				
4. What were the difficulties for the activity: compositions of a news article? (see Table 6)				
5. Did making a comic book (including dialogs and narration) induce your interest in writing?	31(18.2%)	124(73%)	15(8.8%)	0%
6. Was making a comic book helpful for your writing improvement?	28(16.5%)	121(71.2%)	21(12.3%)	0%
7. Why did you like creating comic books or why not? (see Table 7)				
8. Did designing a guidebook for tourists with your group make you interested in writing?	31(18.2%)	124(73%)	15(8.8%)	0%
9. Was designing a guidebook for tourists helpful for your further writing?	29(17%)	130(76.5%)	11(6.5%)	0%
10. Why was this activity helpful or not? (see Table 8)				

The purposes of pair or group writing activities were to allow the students to engage in conversations, share their ideas and opinions, and improve social interactions in the classroom environment that can lead to active learning—eventually they learn from each other. Most of these activities were accomplished at the end of the semester. Among the activities, creating a seal (a symbol of each word) with a partner was the first task that the students were asked. For example, in England, a red rose represents the Queen, and in Germany, an apple represents knowledge. The students' reactions to this activity was positive, indicating that 143 students (84.1%) recounted this pair activity was helpful for their idea development in writing. In a task of English compositions of a news article in Korean (which was a group activity), 107 students (63%) positively answered; on the other hand, the rest 163 students (37%) reacted negatively. Because of the somewhat different

opinions between question 1 and question 2 in Table 5, the questions 3 and 4 were followed respectively. Thus, in a question (question number 3 in Table 5) why creating a seal with your partner was helpful and what difficulties they faced during the compositions of a news article (question number 4 in Table 5), the students expressed their opinions, shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Reactions to Creating a Seal & Compositions of a News Article*

Creating a Seal		Compositions of a News Article	
Why it was helpful	n(%)	What difficulties they faced	n(%)
1. We could learn from each other through conversations in terms of grammar and vocabulary.	53(31.2%)	1. It was hard to transfer the ways of thinking in Korean to the ones in English.	65(38.2%)
2. We could share each other's knowledge and ideas.	43(25.3%)	2. It was difficult to find appropriate vocabulary words.	46 (27.1%)
3. We could build cooperation with partners and create synergy effect.	25(14.7%)	3. It took a lot of time to analyze sentence structures (subject, verb, object, preposition phrases) in sentences written in Korean.	39(22.9%)
4. We could create more friendly atmosphere.	20(11.8%)	4. Other thoughts.	20(11.8%)
5. It was more fun than individual activities.	15(8.8%)		
6. Other thoughts.	14(8.2%)		

Despite the participants' positive reactions to creating a seal, some students recounted that pair or group activity was not helpful because some students were not actively engaged. Some of the students responded that the students with a low proficiency level wanted to contribute to their task, but their low English proficiency did not allow them to do that. Student 28 said, "I like to contribute to my partner, but I couldn't because of my low level of English proficiency. I felt sorry for my partner." It was obvious that the participants' reactions to compositions of a news article were positive; however, 63 students (37%) were not satisfied with the activity. So, they were asked to what difficulties they faced. The results suggested that writing teachers need to focus on teaching how to bridge the gaps between the two different ways of thinking processes from the two different languages. In addition, vocabulary learning, such as choices of appropriate vocabulary in context, should be emphasized in an English composition class. Analysis of sentence structures should be practiced to help the students easily transfer their thought processes from Korean into English. Writing teachers should create some ideas that the students can practice integrating their thought processes with written processes.

The students' opinions about making a comic book (conducted by a group activity), which asked them to write about what they would like to do if they have superhero powers, were also positive. The results showed that 155 (91.2%) and 150 (87.7%) of the students

recounted that this kind of activity was interesting and useful for their intensive writing respectively. In a question why they like this activity, the students' reactions to the question number 7 in Table 5 are as follows.

Table 7

*Reactions to Making a Comic Book*

Categories from the students' comments	n(%)
1. It was very interesting.	55(32.4%)
2. It was a fun activity.	39(22.4%)
3. It was a new and unique idea as far as I concerned about English composition.	25(14.7%)
4. It was helpful because I could exchange ideas and knowledge with my group members.	15(8.8%)
5. I was able to learn how to use grammatical rules about If-Clause through a writing activity.	15(8.8%)
6. I could be actively engaged in the group activity because I would like to help my group.	10(5.9%)
7. Other thoughts.	11(6.5%)

As a final group project for the semester, the students were required to make a tourist guidebook: first, within groups they had to find a place where they would like to introduce to other groups of students; second, they had to search for information related to the place they chose; third, they were asked to make their own tourist guidebook in a creative way, including special places to visit, foods, and special things to do; and lastly, they were requested to present their guidebook in front of the class by using the Powerpoint. As a result of the surveys, 155 students (91.2%) thought this activity made them interested in writing, and 159 students (93.5%) recounted it was helpful for their future writing. Student 75 recounted, "I really enjoyed this project. Our group visited Kyongju together to write about it. I hope to have this kind of activity again." The following Table 8 describes the students' reactions to the activity of making a tourist guidebook. Table 8 shows the responses to the question number 10 in Table 5.

Table 8

*Responses to Making a Tourist Guidebook*

Categories from the students' comments	n (%)
1. It was a fun activity and a new experience, and also made me interested in writing.	57(33.5%)
2. I could have learned new vocabulary words and new expressions by reading information associated with the places.	35(20.6%)
3. It was a good experience to practice writing as well as speaking.	23(13.5%)
4. We could help each other when writing together, in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and expressions.	22(12.9%)
5. I could learn to paraphrase the contents from written into spoken language.	18(10.6%)
6. Other thoughts.	15(8.8%)

It was found that the students learned vocabulary words and new expressions implicitly throughout this activity by reading information on the Internet, writing about the place they chose, and presenting it to the class. This activity not only helped them practice or improve their writing skills but also allowed them to have an opportunity to practice speaking. The drawbacks of this activity that some of the participants indicated were that some of the students were inactive in this activity, and it was also not easy for them to make time for the meeting to prepare for the project together. Student 40 recounted, "I hoped the entire group members participated in this project, but some of them just relied on the peers who were actively engaged in the project." Student 57 said that "we had a hard time meeting all of the members together. We should have done this project in class."

### 3. Reactions to Feedback

Giving feedback to students' writing production was a part of class activity, and the students were asked to answer the questions related to the feedback. Questions 2 and 4 were qualitatively analyzed based on the participants' comments.

Table 9

*Questions and Responses to Feedback*

Questions	Responses n (%)
1. Was teacher feedback helpful in general?	Strongly agree 81(47.6%) Agree 85(50%) Disagree 4(2.4%) Strongly Disagree (0%)
2. Why was teacher feedback helpful?	(see Table 10)
3. Was peer feedback helpful?	Strongly agree 11(6.5%) Agree 77(45.3%) Disagree 82(48.2%) Strongly Disagree (0%)
4. What were the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback?	
5. Were you satisfied with the teacher feedback?	Strongly agree 78(45.9%) Agree 90(52.9%) Disagree 2(1.2%) Strongly Disagree (0%)
6. Which feedback is more helpful for your writing?	Teacher feedback 136(80%) Peer feedback 5(2.9%) Both 29(17.1%)
7. Which area would you ask your teacher to more focus when giving feedback?	Content 9(5.4%) Structure 40(23.5%) Grammar 90(52.9%) Vocabulary 25(14.7%) Spelling and Punctuation 1(0.6%) other 5(2.9%)
8. Which area do you more focus in writing?	Content 32(18.8%) Structure 45(26.5%) Grammar 65(38.2%) Vocabulary 23(13.5%) Spelling and Punctuation 3(1.8%) other 2(1.2%)
9. What are your strong points you found through the feedback?	Content 58(34.1%) Structure 46(27.1%) Grammar 17(10%) Vocabulary 19(11.2%) Spelling and Punctuation 12(7.1%) N/R 18(10.5%)
10. What are your weak points you found through the feedback?	Content 3(1.8%) Structure 16(9.4%) Grammar 96(56.5%) Vocabulary 26(15.3%) Spelling and Punctuation 21(12.3%) other 8(4.7%)

11. Which feedback types do you prefer?	Specific feedback 132(77.6%) Whole 21(12.4%) Underlined 14(8.2%) Self-correction 3(1.8%)
12. Was teacher feedback helpful when writing in class?	Strongly agree 63(37.1%) Agree 99(58.2%) Disagree 8(4.7%) Strongly Disagree (0%)

The results of the surveys showed that 166 students (97.6%) said that teacher feedback was helpful, and also 168 (98.8%) of them revealed that they were strongly satisfied or satisfied with the teacher feedback. This implies that they extremely relied on their teachers' written comments. 162 students (95.3%) also presented strong and positive reactions to the teacher feedback while they were writing in class. The reasons that teachers' feedback was helpful are depicted as follows. Table 10 demonstrates the students' responses to the question number 2 in Table 9.

Table 10

*The Reactions to Why Teacher Feedback was Helpful*

Categories from the students' comments	n(%)
1. I could see what part of writing is incorrect.	96(56.5%)
2. Teacher's feedback helped with future learning.	40(23.5%)
3. It also helped vocabulary and grammar learning.	24(14.1%)
4. My weak points could be complemented through teacher feedback.	10(5.9%)

However, the responses to peer feedback were different from the ones to teacher feedback, presenting that 82 students (48.2%) thought that peer feedback was not helpful for their further writing. Among the answers, most of the students recounted that they did not trust their peer's feedback because their level of English proficiency is not enough to give others feedback. The advantages of peer feedback were that they could read other peers' writings and learn from each other, and that this activity made the class active and comfortable by being given an opportunity to share ideas and opinions. Student 35 said, "I felt comfortable to read my peer's writing. I also could learn how they write." In spite of the advantages of peer feedback, the students in this study obviously preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback.

Regarding feedback types, 132 students (77.6%) overwhelmingly preferred specific feedback, followed by general comments (about 22 students/12.4%), simple underling of errors (14 students/8.2%), and self-correction (31 students/1.8%). This result was associated with the subsequent question about which area they would like to ask teachers more to focus when providing feedback. About 53% of the students revealed that grammar on their feedback should be first of all taken care of, followed by sentence structures (40 students/23.5%), vocabulary (25 students/14.7%), content (9 students/5.4%), spelling and punctuation, and others. In addition, the findings showed that the students cared about

grammar when writing, and that the students' weak areas in writing were shown in grammar and vocabulary. It is likely that the students thought that good English composition should deliver perfect sentences with no grammar mistakes which are inconsistent with the purposes of writing that the teachers intended.

## V. INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

This study examined what writing activities were performed in English writing classes in a university, and the purpose of this study was to see the students' reactions to these activities. The present study also drew suggestions and implications for successful English writing performances in an EFL context. The study found that 90% of the participants were strongly satisfied with the activities given mostly in the textbook and the activities created by the teachers. As shown in the section of study findings, the students positively responded to multiple activities such as warm-ups given or applied from the textbook (such as topics, brainstorming, prewriting, learning organization, reading example writings, and discussions) before the actual writing. It means that the students' prior knowledge should be activated through diverse ways of activities. Also, these activities can encourage students to plan as they go along and to understand the evolving purposes of their writing and they are able to allow sufficient time in the planning phase for students to share their ideas and plans, and evoke new information for further development of a schema for the writing task (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005).

With regard to topic discussions with partners prior to the actual writing, half of the students were dissatisfied with this type of activity. On the other hand, as a result of classroom observations and conversations, the two teachers thought pre-discussion with partners before the intensive writing could help students share ideas and plans and also encourage cooperative learning. It could also connect a speaking skill to a writing skill that can result in developing balanced English skills. The somewhat negative reasons they described were that they did not trust their partners, and that some of the students did not actively participate in. These aspects were derived from the fact that they did not know each other well, especially at the beginning of the semester, so they were reluctant to speak. This implies that there was a relationship between the rapport among students and active learning, indicating that the more they are familiar with the class and peers, the more possibility they will have active learning. Thus, pair or group activities are likely to be more effective when the students know each other.

Moreover, the study found that the students positively reacted to pair or group activities in writing classes. The intended purposes of these activities were to encourage the students to learn through collaboration and increase social dialog that "is a major resource for the

development of thinking and that interaction is also integral to language learning" (Gibbons, 2002, p. 8). The students revealed that pair or group activities were very interesting and fun, and new experiences, and that could create more friendly and active class environment, build cooperation, and create synergy effect. These activities provided the students with the opportunity of learning grammar, vocabulary, and new expressions by working together. Especially, the activity, making a tourist guidebook, not only helped them practice or improve their writing skills but also allowed them to have an opportunity to practice speaking that formed a continuum from written to spoken language (Gibbons, 2002). The disadvantages of pair or group work were that some of the students did not actively participate in, and that some thought their low level of English proficiency did not contribute to their group work. This indicated that there might be a possibility that inactive participants are the students with low level of proficiency. It is suggested that writing teachers first need to find out their students' proficiency level, and then consider ways that the low level students can do active participation for group work.

Finally, feedback on writing plays a crucial role in encouraging the development of students' writing and is also considered as critical in improving and consolidating learning. The study showed that the participants clearly preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Connor and Asenavage (1994), Paulus (1999), Tsui and Ng (2000), and Yanghee Kim (2010) reporting that teacher feedback had more significant effects than peer feedback. The drawback of peer feedback was that they didn't trust their peers because they are not qualified to do that. The findings are in line with those of Yanghee Kim (2010) and Mijin Joo and Yanghee Kim (2010). To avoid students' too much reliance on teachers' feedback, writing teachers need to provide an educational environment where students could read other peers' writings and learn from each other, and also where peer feedback can make the class active and comfortable; for example, by giving students some specific guidelines about how to evaluate their peers' written products.

In feedback types, 132 students (77.6%) preferred specific feedback, followed by general comments, simple underling of errors, and self-correction. About 90 students (53%) revealed that grammar on their feedback should be in the first place taken care of, and then followed by sentence structures, vocabulary, content, and spelling and punctuation. The findings demonstrated that the students very much preferred form-focused feedback. In an educational setting where English is not a medium of language, it causes a lack of input and output outside the classroom. It is easy that one might take it for granted that for English learners, grammar correction on feedback is the most important element to help them improve their writing. However, to help them get away from the idea that creating perfect sentences with no grammatical mistakes in writing is a good writing, writing teachers need to make them be aware of the definitions of writing that expresses

their thought processes into written forms in an organized and logical way. To accomplish this, writing teachers should also provide them with varied types or forms of feedback, not just focus on form-focused feedback. Also, to avoid too much focus on grammar in writing, the grammar instruction should be balanced between explicit and implicit learning. To help them learn specific grammar rules for a successful writing, writing teachers explicitly need to cover grammar points and practices in the textbook. Teachers can explain the grammar focus for each chapter in the textbook, if necessary. They also need to experience incidental grammar or vocabulary learning, implicit learning, which "is learning that occurs when the mind is elsewhere, such as on understanding a text or using language for communicative purposes" (Decarrico, 2001, p. 289). For example, students, like the students in this study, can experience incidental grammar learning (including vocabulary and new expressions) through the projects of pair or group activities and also individual writing. The students could implicitly learn or experience it through communications with peers, other tasks given, and teacher feedback.

In sum, since the students in this study positively responded to the activities, the writing classes led to successful learning environments. Thus, the multiple activities in the present study can be good models and examples that writing teachers might utilize or apply for their own classes. The examples of the activities in this study will also be guidelines for what writing teachers can do before (brainstorming, prewriting, reading example writings, and discussions), during (pair, group, and individual work), and after writing (teacher feedback, peer feedback, and different types of feedback). In addition, the activities done in the current study were in line with a process approach to writing. The fact that the students were satisfied with this approach means that as Emig (1971) stated, writers engage in various thinking processes when they write. Writing is a thinking process that proceeds in cycles and recycles through subprocesses, such as planning, translating, and reviewing.

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