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Challenges in Assessing Multimodal Composition: Multiple Case Study in Secondary Schools of South Korea*

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Individuals must learn a wide range of abilities to respond to changing social needs and multiple and multimodal literacies because, thanks to rapidly evolving technologies, new communication media have transformed the ways in which people understand and use language. Multimodal literacies encompass a variety of representational modes as communication channels; for example, computer users generate more spoken-like, informal texts, and even use symbols as new standard terms. The acceptance of multimodal literacies has profound implications for English education in Korea, in that such linguistic and cultural diversity requires teachers to change their views on teaching writing skills and standards. That is, teachers should not force students to accept only one standard or set of skills, but should teach them to be flexible by using multiple languages and communication patterns. Teachers as active agents can reconceptualize literacy and literacy pedagogy, and can encourage students to write using different types of texts. However, in this study, some teacher participants expressed concerns about teaching multimodal composition due to external barriers (e.g., highly test-based curriculum) or internal barriers (e.g., low confidence). In order to overcome these and other obstacles, targeted additional professional development is needed.

[multimodal composition/new literacies/ barriers to teach writing/writing assessment/복합양식적 글쓰기/뉴 리터러시/글쓰기지도의 장애/글쓰기평가]

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I. INTRODUCTION

A key aspect in the practice of new literacies is understanding that they are more self-generated than traditional literacy supported by formal institutions (Barton & Lee, 2012). Barton and Lee defined these new literacies as vernacular literacies, compared with the dominant literacy most appreciated in a school setting. Vernacular literacies are not valued and are often used outside educational institutions, where people use technological advancements to engage in literacy activities by exchanging emails or text messages and responding to posts or writing stories (Barton & Lee, 2012). Multimodality is an approach to communication in which multiple modes offer the potential to achieve complex representational and communication tasks (Kress, 2010). Semiotic modes such as visual, verbal, written, and gestural become resources for communication practice. Therefore, to understand new literacies and multimodality is to reframe literacy to consider social and cultural contexts that people sustain or reinforce in specific ways (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006; Hill, 2010).

Because new literacies and multimodality bring a variety of forms of communication and modes to the learning process, it does not mean that teachers must abandon traditional skills to teach multimodal literacy. A pedagogy of new literacies is meant to supplement traditional literacy rather than replace it (Cope & Kalantizis, 2000; New London Group, 1996; Rowsell, Kosnik, Beck, 2008), as traditional strategies and skills can be used in enhancing students' digital competency. For example, multimodality helps students become keenly aware of audiences (readers) and encourages them to choose the most effective tools to convey their thoughts (Stornaiuolo, Hull, & Nelson, 2009). Students consider the visual effects of color, boldness, and layout to make their readers focus on specific content (Hill, 2010). When integrating performance elements into the writing process, students review their own writing as well as their peers' from an audience perspective. In this case, using voice, gesture, and movement to communicate with audiences about their topic becomes an act of literacy (Jones, 2010). Thus, as writers move among different modes, the available modes and multiple semiotic systems orchestrate meanings for representation as well as communication (Stornaiuolo et al., 2009).

In spite of positive aspects of multimodality, however, a number of teachers are reluctant to integrate multimodality into the classroom because of various barriers or challenges. Assessment of multimodal products is the primary challenge. Traditional assessment criteria are not appropriate because these typically assess linguistic elements; however, considering the complexity of multimodality, teachers can integrate different criteria to assess nontraditional texts. As Lankshear and Knobel (2006) indicate, new literacies differ from old literacies in that while the latter emphasizes primarily form and content, the former emphasizes and evaluates "participatory," "collaborative," and "distributed" aspects.

New literacies require students to participate and even collaborate with others to produce meanings using a wide range of modes. Understanding new literacies as ongoing processes to construct identities and form valued activities with a range of intertextuality is critical to their assessment (Hammett, 2007).

This study presents an exploratory overview of Korean English teachers' understanding about multimodal composition and practices. In particular, it examined how teachers implement and evaluate multimodal composition in a school culture which privileges standardized test scores. The two guiding questions are as follows:

1) How do Korean secondary English teachers articulate their understanding of assessment of multimodal composition?
2) What are Korean secondary English teachers' perceived challenges or barriers in assessing multimodal composition?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Social-Semiotic Theory of Multimodality

Michael Halliday (1978) introduced "social semiotics" as opposed to the traditional approach where language exists independent from society. Language as a medium enables human beings to form a personality in a society and to perform social roles. Using language is an ongoing process to exchange meanings with others. Halliday notes that language serves three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational component refers to ideas of the world and consciousness. Through it, language conveys cultural experiences. Speakers also express their own experiences as members of a culture. The interpersonal component makes speakers' social and interpersonal interactions possible. This represents the participatory nature of language. By intruding into a context or situation, speakers convey their attitudes and judgments to others. Interpersonal meanings occur while they use language. Lastly, the textual component shows speakers' potential to connect ideas into meaningful contexts. Its relation to language is represented both in the verbal and nonverbal environment.

Based upon Halliday's social semiotics, Kress (2010) developed a general framework to explain communication as a meaning-making process in a social context. Although language mainly serves as a means to make and convey meanings, it is insufficient to account for domains beyond language. Kress argues that social semiotic theory can provide benefits to people with different preferences "for the temporal, or the spatial, for image or speech, and so on." That is, it focuses on all types of meaning-making processes or

possible channels, whether they are visual, aural, or verbal. Social semiotics assumes that social, cultural, economic, and technological developments affect practices, resources, and interests of members of a social group within socially acceptable boundaries (Hodge & Kress, 1998; Kress, 2010). It also includes how people understand or interpret meanings and texts and how they change their perceptions of communication resources as society changes (Hodge & Kress, 1998). In this way, sign-making processes for communication depend on ongoing transformation, since people continue to connect forms to meanings in accordance with particular contexts and needs (Mavers, 2009). In this sense, signs and messages represent the interest of sign-makers (Kress, 2010).

According to Kress (2010), the sign as one entity combined with forms and meanings is not used but made by sign-makers. They select signs to make or remake knowledge using cultural resources. Kress argues that arbitrariness and convention are actually socially motivated by the decisions and interests of the sign-makers. Thus, the focus of social semiotics is not on unchanging semiotic structures, but on new social identities and changing historic circumstances that allow sign-makers to change usages and design (Hodge & Kress, 1988).

All signs have their own motivations (Kress, 2010). The new meanings are formed whenever people use them. Kress gives an example of a three-year-old boy's drawing to explain how signs work. A car represented on paper as a circle indicates that the use of signs is based upon a "double metaphor." The boy selects an object of his interest. The object (the car) becomes the first metaphor. Then, he draws a circle to indicate wheels. In this case, the wheels become the second metaphor. In other words, the boy chooses the circle because it is regarded as "an apt signifier" to represent the car (Kress, 2003; Skarr, 2009). All signs are produced through this metaphoric process (Skarr, 2009). Kress also notes that signs are created as a result of interplay between the sign-maker's intention and available semiotic resources.

Mode is a semiotic resource that is socially and culturally shaped to make meanings (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Kress, 2010). According to Kress (2010), modes including "image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack, and 3D objects" (p. 15) can be used to represent and communicate in different cultural environments. Each mode serving different purposes and uses in various contexts may have different priorities. For instance, writing can be organized through grammar and syntax. Visual and spatial resources such as color, space, and punctuation marks can also contribute to making meaning as much as linguistic modes do. All these modes are significant whether they are linguistic or nonlinguistic since they have different potentials for meanings (Kress, 2010).

Along with mode, the medium is of importance in that meanings are instantiated through it and become available to others (Bezemer & Kress, 2008). Print, book, screen, and other

technological devices are examples of the medium. In the age of new media, web-based learning resources function as the medium, replacing traditional textbooks. Such change reflects social environments moving from composition toward design (Bezemer & Kress, 2008). The focus is on the designers who make signs as text in accordance with their interests. Kress (2010) comments that multimodal designers present social positions and knowledge to appeal to specific audiences using image, writing, color, and layout. From this perspective, they attend to the process to explore tasks, purposes, and audiences, and to contextualize these relations with available resources (Bezemer & Kress, 2008).

In sum, social semiotics includes the study of how people choose appropriate grammar and vocabulary and use them to suit their purpose, audience, and mode (Ryan, 2011). In teaching writing, the focus of social semiotics includes instructions to make students choose different social purposes and contexts through a shared language.

2. Multimodality in ESL/EFL

English language learners develop language and social skills in an online, global social setting as they communicate and negotiate meaning with counterparts in other countries using technological tools and semiotic forms (Black, 2009). Visuals, in particular, help English Language Learners (ELLs) to extract the linguistic aspect of meanings. Using Halliday's (1978) framework (ideational, interpersonal, and textual/compositional), Unsworth (2006) explains image and language relations. An ideational function entails the relation of both image and language by "concurrence," "complementarity," and "connection." Concurrence means the equal integration of image and language for ideational meaning. For example, two modes can indicate the same information, although the presentation methods are different. Complementarity is another way to explain the image-language relationship, in that one mode supports the other mode by providing additional meanings. Finally, connection involves additions, or projections, to address time, place, and purpose.

Language learners can develop multimodal communicative competence by understanding that image and language can coexist in a text (Royce, 2002). Royce saw that language teachers can develop methodological suggestions using multimodality, and that instructions involving activities based on multimodality can be beneficial for ELLs, considering their limited English competency. For instance, activities using multimodality can be implemented in the writing classroom, where students participate in the meaning-making process by using a sequence of pictures and writing a story. The image and story production leads students not only to understand various genres (e.g., narrative writing), but also to recall stories associated with a visual representation.

Nelson (2006) examined four undergraduates' multimedia texts by applying Kress's

(2003) notions of synaesthesia related to psychological processes, when ideas shift from one mode to the other. Four English language learners enrolled in Multimedia Writing at UC Berkeley were selected for the qualitative study, conducted over an eleven-week period. The one-hour writing course was designed to involve creating multimedia writing via computer. Using topics related to language, culture, and identity, individual students wrote a personal statement in the form of digital storytelling. A variety of data including the students' journals, interviews, and essay drafts were collected and analyzed.

The findings were consistent with previous research on using multimodality to teach English language learners. A multimodal element such as an image provides alternative ways for these students to understand authorial expression. Images as well as verbal expressions came to enable a deeper and clearer meaning through the synaesthetic process of shifting modals. For example, one student, for her story dealing with her experience of living in different countries, created visual representations with a collage of photos. She represented her cultural identity by showing not one but many photos to mean that her identity was not with one culture only but with several cultures. In this way, combining words and images can help language learners become creative writers, which is the essence of synaesthesia (Kress, 2003).

D.-s. Shin and Cimasko (2008) conducted a qualitative study in a college ESL class to examine how students use available modes to create multimodal argumentative essays. Using Kress's synaesthetic semiosis, the multimodal writing projects and assignments of fourteen undergraduates were analyzed. After being instructed how to make a simple web page, their first assignment was to create personal web sites using Dreamweaver and Microsoft Word. Next, the students worked on writing traditional print-based texts to post on the web site. For this activity, the instructor encouraged students to consider including all useful elements regardless of linguistic or nonlinguistic mode.

By comparing and contrasting traditional argumentative essays and multimodal texts, the students had opportunities to discuss how modes such as images, audio, video, and hyperlinks could contribute to forming a unified argument. All of the participants placed a priority on the linguistic over other modes, even if the instructor introduced multimodal elements to make writing effective. In many cases, the synthesizing process showed an unequal relationship between the linguistic and other available modes. For example, one student was reluctant to integrate different modes because inserting an image into the academic text seemed inappropriate. The students' limited use of multimodal elements was result of lessons that emphasized traditional elements of argument rather than how to use multimodality.

Multimodality has been used to teach language and content simultaneously for high school students with limited English. A case study conducted by Early and Marshall (2008) investigated how ESL students appreciated literacy texts containing multimodal elements.

One teacher (with over 30 years' teaching experience) and 28 students with various native languages participated in the study over a four-week period. The research site was a secondary school located on the west side of Vancouver, Canada. Multiple sources of data including observations, interviews, students' written reflections, students' self-evaluations, and the teachers' evaluations of students' essays were collected.

In the study (Early & Marshall, 2008), the teacher used a visual aid as a mediating tool to help students understand and interpret linguistically complex and abstract concepts in a short story. She used a visual representation called a mandala, which is rooted in Buddhism, as a non-linguistic symbol to represent complicated concepts. Students were required to have their mandala contain symbols and quotes from the text to illustrate the essence of characters, styles, and themes. When given visual aids, students tended to engage in multiple readings by working between two modes. As a final project, students chose their own topic from among three elements (characterization, style, and theme), and then wrote an essay about the short story based on analysis of the group. The students' written reflections indicated and the interviews reported that they seemed to read the text more carefully and critically.

3. Assessing and Reassessing Multimodal Composition

Mono-modal verbal skills are most often taught because they are easily measured (Vincent, 2006). Scores are compared with those of other students' and ranked in order to be interpreted and placed. Test results reflect word skills entirely. Such high-stake summative assessments conducted in most classrooms to test students' verbal skills have been criticized because these types of assessment evaluate certain aspects of learning only. For instance, summative assessment favors final products (e.g., final papers or semester tests) over the process of completing a project (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010). DeVoss, Eidman-Aadahl, and Hicks (2010) reported that summative assessments narrow curriculum and further prevent effective writing instruction that can lead to students' high quality writing.

As curricula continue to include expanded literacy practices and emphasize digital literacy, there has been a surge of interest in how we assess new literacies (Hammett, 2007; NCTE, 2008). When teachers assess multimodal compositions there needs to be a different emphasis, since the nature of print-based writing and multimodal writing is different (DeVoss et al., 2010). For example, DeVoss et al. emphasize that the writing process and different skills such as "brainstorming, drafting, and revising" are more important in multimodal composition than in the traditional writing classroom where the focus is on a final product. Accordingly, teachers cannot use the same assessment tools or rubrics used for print-based writing to assess multimodal products.

Huot (2002) suggests using alternative language and practice to assess students' writing. The assumption here is the need to create a new discourse that helps us to understand assessment as a positive force in teaching writing: not so much to find students' weaknesses and to punish them as to find ways to communicate with students. The purpose of assessing writing is to promote writing well and to help students learn how. Research advocates incorporating multiple types of assessment and using assessment as a part of instructional practice (Hammett, 2007; Lee & Coniam, 2013).

Formative assessment, for example, can be used to help teachers combine instruction with assessment (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). Contrary to summative assessment, formative assessment includes both formal and informal assessment procedures. It is a process to collect data about learning (Heritage, 2007) in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement (Keen, 2005). After identifying gaps, teachers provide feedback at multiple levels, during which students engage in learning. Students collaborate not only with teachers but also with peers to develop a shared understanding and move forward. The ultimate goal of formative assessment is to lead teachers and students to progress toward established criteria or standards (Heritage, 2007).

From a case study where a teacher uses performance assessment, Fuchs (1994) lists the advantages of integrating writing instructions into writing assessment. First, feedback enhances students' motivation as well as involvement. Second, teachers monitor students' difficulties and progress. Third, teachers' instructional methods can be accurately evaluated. Finally, teachers adjust their instructions in accordance with individual students' needs. Isaacson (1999) notes that performance assessment is strongly aligned with instruction focusing on meaningful, multidimensional projects. Its scoring method, which includes both process and product, helps teachers look at the pattern of students' thinking.

Standards created by teachers also are critical in that they help determine what to teach and what to evaluate. These site-based and locally driven assessments reflect a new pedagogy where students' individual energies are valued (Huot, 2002). Isaacson's (1999) study shows how he developed his own assessment criteria based on a formative evaluation system and attempted to link instruction to assessment. He created assessment tools having five components: fluency, content, conventions, syntax, and vocabulary. During five-week summer sessions, he revised the writing criteria to reflect writing performance more accurately and sensitively. These helped teachers to inform students' performance and students to internalize standards by enlisting criteria as explicit as possible.

Lee and Coniam (2013) emphasize that the focus of assessment should be on assessment *for* learning (AFL), not on assessment *of* learning (AOL). The priority of AFL is to use assessment to promote students' learning through formative feedback. By so doing, teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses and adjust their teaching to narrow the

gap between what students can and cannot do. Lee and Coniam (2013) conducted a mixed method study to investigate how teachers implemented AFL in a secondary writing classroom in Hong Kong, where examination-driven AOL is widespread. The findings of the study indicate that teachers are positive about integrating more innovative writing practices such as linking assessment to instruction, although they would stick to traditional assessment practices in their test-oriented culture. Students' responses about writing were positive in that they were more engaged in writing activities through the instructional cycle. By the end of the study, students' writing performance showed improvement based on pre- and posttest data.

New models suggested by Huot (2002) move classroom focus from the teacher to the students, so that the students themselves have more authority over their work than previously and put more effort into making meanings. Students may not be familiar with assessing their work because they may not have a clear understanding of assessment and do not have experience. Therefore, the teacher requires that students rethink and assess their own writing and relate writing quality to the writing process. During this kind of instructive evaluation, students may become more aware of what they are trying to create and the rhetorical targets they are trying to use. That is, the purpose of formative assessment is to involve students in all stages of their assessment.

For an alternative way to assess students' writing, Elbow (2006) suggests teachers adopt contract grading. Instead of setting one goal as Inoue (2004) did, students compare and negotiate to reach agreement. They attempt to do all tasks based on contracts with instructors. Group members create multiple criteria, and students are allowed to evaluate whether they reach their goals. In this system, students are supposed to receive feedback and evaluation throughout the semester from peers and an instructor without talking about grades. In this model, feedback can function as dialogue (Hatzipanagos & Warburton, 2009) between a teacher and students, and among students. Emerging technologies such as blogs and wikis make ongoing assessment easier by promoting feedback dialogue. In particular, asynchronous communication facilitates communication even outside of the classroom (Gikandi, Morrow, & Davis, 2011) and helps students become self-regulated learners, since repeated feedback allows students not only to respond to the teacher's comments but also to set goals and to adjust their behavior to reach the goals (Wingate, 2010).

III. METHOD

1. Research Design

The multiple case study was employed to generate detailed descriptions and to explore ways to explain the phenomenon. All data come from multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2002) such as interviews, observations, notes, and documents such as teaching materials and lesson plans, and I examined the data carefully and dealt with it in accordance with research protocol. Based on the data, I attempted to understand, interpret, and evaluate experience from their own perspectives (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2006). This approach allowed me to understand "both externally observable behaviors, and internal states" (Patton, 2002, p. 48). This type of qualitative design provided a useful tool to understand not only teachers' behaviors in the classroom but also their perceptions, attitudes and values.

The purpose of this study was to examine instructional practices and participants' perceived challenges regarding assessing multimodal composition as conducted by one middle school teacher and five high school teachers in South Korea. Information about each teacher, his or her social setting and experience (Berg, 2007) was systematically collected in order to understand how these teachers perceived teaching and assessing multimodal composition within the context of their Korean schools. Each case offers detailed descriptions of teaching practices used for writing instruction. In addition, a cross-case analysis compares how teacher-participants were different or similar on the issues. Following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) method of constant comparative analysis, each case was constantly compared until reliable interpretations emerged.

In sum, a qualitative design is an appropriate method for this study because it helps to develop a possible explanation of the phenomenon in real life contexts. The importance of the study is not in explaining causal relationships between what is observed and what researchers hypothesize (Creswell, 2002) but in understanding the phenomenon holistically, such as how Korean English teachers respond to social changes (contexts) and how their attitudes and perceptions may affect their assessment of students' writing.

2. Research Contexts and Participants

Understanding the research sites and participants' background information is critical in a qualitative inquiry in that the researcher must select individuals and sites in line with the study's intention. Thus, selected samples allow the researcher to learn about a central phenomenon through a detailed understanding of the sites and the participants' answers as formulated during the research process (Creswell, 2002). After first obtaining general

information through a demographic survey, I then selected individuals that indicated they used multimodality in their classroom. Such "purposive sampling" helped me select participants using those writing and assessment practices I was interested in exploring (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008).

To protect confidentiality, the schools are referred to by numbers S1 through S6. Likewise, the teacher participants are called by numbers, T1 through T6. The complete summary of research sites and participants' demographic information is shown in Table 1.

TABLE1

The Summary of Research Sites and Participants' Demographic Information

Research Sites (Participants)	S1 T1	S2 T2	S3 T3	S4 T4	S5 T5	S6 T6
Type of school	middle school	high school	high school	high school	high school	high school
Location	Seoul	Gyeonggi	Gyeonggi	Seoul	Seoul	Gyeonggi
Class size	30	31	27	30	32	22
English level (Ss)	Adv	Low to Med medium	Med	Low	Med to Adv advanced	Adv
Teacher gender	female	female	male	male	male	female
Experience (T)	4 years	16 years	7 years	6 years	9 years	11 years
Writing per week	0-30min	30 min-1hr	0-30min	30 min-1hr	0-30min	1hr-more
Multimodality use	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Note. S = School; T = Teacher; Ss = Students; Adv = Advanced; Med = Medium

All data for this study were obtained by four major methods.

1) Demographic Survey and Interview

Before the study began, a demographic survey was given to all participants to complete. The demographic survey consisted of open-ended questions about the teachers' backgrounds. This information helped identify the characteristics of the population (Patton, 2002) and narrowed down interview questions afterwards. The questionnaire items included: gender, teaching experience, education, and information about their writing classroom. Most of the data were collected via interviews. An in-depth interview is a useful way to collect rich data because it uses open-ended questions to explore participants' feelings and perspectives (Patton, 2002). In this way, a deeper understanding can be developed as the interviewer and interviewee co-construct meanings (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

2) Observation

Based on the demographic survey and short conversations, six teachers were selected for observation. Since the purpose of observation in this study was not to become immersed in a culture or context, the researcher became a direct observer who watched and was as unobtrusive as possible (Patton, 2002). The focus of the observation was on whether and how the teachers used multimodality in their writing classroom, what modes they were using, what types of activities they were using, and what types of assessment they were employing. A classroom observation checklist was used to assure consistency in observations of different classes. It served as a tool to explain to what degree characteristics of multimodality were observed during each classroom observation. The classroom visits were done at agreed upon times, and lasted 45 minutes at the middle school and 50 minutes in each high school classroom.

3) Notes

In addition to recording of the interviews, notes were taken during each interview and classroom observation. Key terms or phrases appearing in my notes could serve as cues not only to facilitate dialog during the interview but also to remember noteworthy points afterwards. Patton (2002) summarizes four important roles of taking notes: a) note-taking allows an interviewer to formulate new questions while checking out understanding of what an interviewee says; b) notes serve as reminders of early insights which can appear in subsequent interviews; c) note-taking can facilitate later analysis by locating important quotes; and d) notes may be used as a back-up in case the recorder does not function.

4) Documents

There is a wealth of data related to teachers' daily classroom activities. Two types of documents were requested after the interviews and were examined. First were official documents, including the curriculum used to shape teachers' attitudes and guide their behaviors. Second were official and unofficial documents teachers tailored for their personal use, which demonstrated the degree to which they emphasized various aspects of the curriculum. For example, lesson plans, and teaching materials such as textbooks, workbooks, handouts, websites, power-point slides, photographs, and rubrics are valuable sources that provide insight about how teachers use pedagogical knowledge. These data also were used to triangulate findings.

IV. RESULTS

Assessment is a complicated process by which teaching and learning take place. Currently, schools assess student performance in two ways. One is to assess students' knowledge in a format of multiple-choice questions, which accounts for 60-70 percent of the exams. Teachers do not have much discretion in this case. The other is performance assessment, which gives them more freedom in choosing formats, contents, frequency, and methods of assessing students, if teachers include this as 30-40 percent of writing exams. In other words, the trend to assess English proficiency has shifted from multiple-choice-only formats to formats combining multiple-choice questions and essay style assessment. All examples below illustrate how teachers made use of performance assessment and, by doing so, how they tried to or did not integrate instruction and learning.

1. Assessment Practices by Teachers

1) Summative Assessment - Teacher 1

The middle school where Teacher 1 is working is located in an affluent area where parents' zeal for education is quite high. Besides, middle school grades are critical when students apply for special-purpose high schools that provide a more favorable curriculum for entering prestigious universities. As a result, parents as well as students cannot but be sensitive to school grades. Although the education ministry stipulated that teachers should include essay exams about 30-40 percent, it is actually hard for teachers to write essay questions. Teacher 1 explained:

> I know, we all know, that assessing writing is much harder than assessing multiple-choice exams. Most of all, I'm not confident at all to be objective in scoring students' writing. I have bad memories about essay exams. We teachers used to ask students to write longer essays, but we failed to score them objectively. Yes, we had a rubric to help us consider consistent criteria, but even it was too vague. I got parents' and students' complaints because the students were not satisfied with their grade. After much trial and error, teachers decided not to make things complicated. Now, we give students five essay questions to practice in advance. Essay questions include subjects like: my dream, my best friends, my favorite place, and so on. Students write five sentences for one question for 20 minutes on examination day. . . . Most students finish the exams within 10 minutes because they already know the questions and have practiced writing. After grading papers, I give students

> their scores. I don't need to provide feedback because their errors are obvious in most cases.

Teacher 1 thought essay exams in the school did not differ from multiple-choice exams in that both exams are administered and scored according to objective criteria. Therefore, structure and convention domains are emphasized over other domains because logical flaws, grammar errors, and misspellings are identified with comparative ease. Content may be also an important factor in completing a task, but creativity is not necessarily a key requirement for a good essay. She mentioned, "It is better to make five error-free sentences than to write their own thoughts. Most students memorize the sentences that parents or their private tutors made." As for domains of multimodality, "We do not consider modes and the relation of modes as components of evaluation. How can I give a good grade to students who are apt at drawing? They may be good students in art class, not in my class." She was skeptical about integrating multimodality when assessing students' work, given that there was a lack of ways to measure it objectively.

2) Between Embedded Assessment and Summative Assessment - Teachers 2, 3, and 5

Three teachers stood between embedded and summative assessment on the continuum of assessment. Embedded assessment is defined as a learning opportunity to monitor students and to provide appropriate instructions. It can be either formative or summative, as long as it is a means to gather information about student learning (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2010). In the case of Teacher 2, she related combining reading with a writing activity whenever she finished a unit. Using usage and important expressions in the textbook, students created three or four sentences. Situations also were provided to describe the context. This writing activity was short but consistent, taking place on a weekly basis. The teacher collected the students' papers and graded them on content and structure. Conventions such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors were rarely considered as elements for assessment. For a book project conducted once during the semester, she included the domain of multimodality in assessing students' final products. The criteria for this book project were content, structure, and interrelationship of multiple modes. Unless grammatical errors hindered the reader's understanding, they were ignored. Instead, the teacher provided feedback with students to fix their grammar errors throughout the course.

Teacher 3 tried to implement a writing activity in relation to reading class for performance assessment. He indicated in the survey that the content domain was most important, followed by multimodality, lastly structure and conventions. According to the rubric used in School 3, content should be clear enough to attract readers' attention and have relevant details. Both structure and conventions were given less importance, and

some elements such as organization and grammar errors did not affect grades as long as content was appropriate to express the writer's intention. One of the essay questions was to write an argument whose point was to consider both sides and to take a position. Students were to choose between the advantages of group tours and independent travel, and write three reasons why they prefer either type of travel. In addition, on the front page of the essay exam, students had to visually present graphic organizers to show how they planned and developed ideas. To make these types of essay questions familiar, Teacher 3 said, "I prepare different topics for argument essays and make students practice writing two or three times. I help them brainstorm ideas, and correct grammatical mistakes in the classroom."

Likewise, Teacher 5 included argument essay writing to assess students' performance. However, his emphasis was on structure, followed by content, conventions and multimodality. He taught that to write the argument essay effectively, the essay should have a strong introduction, middle and ending along with transition words. Following a five-paragraph essay format, he emphasized logical connections between paragraphs. His rubric contained concrete information that students could follow. For example, "I asked students to write five sentences for each paragraph. The first introductory paragraph includes the thesis statement…. In the final conclusion paragraph, the thesis statement should be restated, and body paragraphs should be summarized." He provided a great deal of feedback regarding structure, content, and grammar during the writing activities, but asked students to submit a polished paper by the end of the semester and gave them a grade without any verbal or written feedback.

3) Formative Assessment - Teachers 4 and 6

In accordance with the Ministry of Education's guidelines, Teachers 4 and 6 included writing-type exams. However, their perceptions about assessing writing differed from the other teachers'. Teacher 4 used a writing portfolio that was a collection of each student's writing. As mentioned, he uploaded his lectures online for students to prepare for English classes. The next day, he distributed a worksheet including comprehension check-up questions as well as writing activities. Students saved the worksheets after the class (in their portfolio). Writing activities were conducted not to assess students' use of English, but to reduce their fear of English. As a result, content and the domain of multimodality were emphasized more than structure and conventions. The teacher collected their work and worksheets once a month to monitor the students' progress and to identify their individual needs. His students' writing scores did not vary as long as they completed all of the tasks. Teacher 4 praised the students' efforts and accomplishments to encourage them to use more English. He said:

> I never criticize their lack of English in the classroom. If students repeat the same mistakes, I just write down their mistakes and correct the expressions on the blackboard without mentioning any students' names. They have a high anxiety when it comes to English. If I try to correct their English in public, I know these girls would never speak or write. So if they have the right number of entries and completed tasks, they can have full credit for their work. Because they know they can have a perfect score based on effort, they work very hard. Most of all, the students seem to be satisfied with their progress, comparing the first worksheet with the last one. I think a writing portfolio is the best way to boost students' confidence. The name "portfolio" looks fancy, but once you collect pieces of work over the long period, it becomes your portfolio.

Teacher 6 also gave students full credit on writing exams unless they broke their promise. Although she indicated criteria for assessing writing, these were rendered meaningless in that all students received full credit as long as they completed the tasks on time. She explained why she used absolute evaluation based on their objective performance on assignments, saying, "My students are top students. They are very competitive and work harder than anyone. Their scores can be ranked when they take multiple-choice exams, which account for more than 60 percent. I think that will be enough. Why would I make them stressed with more exams?" She made performance assessment a part of instruction by increasing the frequency to four times per semester. Students' involvement with essay exams averaged once a week, after finishing a lesson. Writing topics were usually connected both to the previous lesson and to the students' lives. She believed that, "Writing should be related to our own life. You know, we all have hidden instincts to express ourselves. So, to copy and paste writing from the Internet is not possible. Students in my class actually do not think of writing as a boring subject for exams, but as a process to provide opportunities to reflect on their own life." Her students were required to complete two projects and four essay papers throughout the semester. She also related writing projects with a speaking activity. "I make students present their writing in front of their peers. They do their best, and it helps to know their presentation skills do not affect their writing scores. They are self-motivated, and don't want to be humiliated in public." The teacher hands out reflection sheets for the "audience" to evaluate the presentations. The reflection sheets serve two functions among students: to establish the importance of the presentation for the presenters and of classroom management for the listeners. Even if the presentation would not count for credit, students regarded this event as something special. By assigning the job of filling out reflection sheets to the listeners, these students were required to participate by concentrating on the speakers' presentations.

2. Teachers' Perceived Challenges or Barriers in Teaching and Assessing Multimodal Composition

Challenges existed for all six teachers in teaching and assessing multimodal composition. All the teachers shared some similar challenges or barriers but also had distinctive problems caused by their different contexts and perceptions about teaching writing.

1) Teachers' Perceived External and Internal Barriers: Case 1 - Teacher 1

Since school 1, a middle school, was founded 27 years ago, school facilities were old-fashioned in many ways. The average age of teachers was over 40 years old, and all teachers were not equally receptive to new technology. Teacher 1 believed that these factors posed some challenges to the adoption of new technology. She said, "I belong to the younger generation of teachers in my school. We have many veteran teachers, but they don't like any change. Often I want to teach English in nontraditional ways, but I don't know how." When asked about using technology, she explained:

> Well, I will never use a computer lab for my English class because we lack enough computers, and they also are too old. I can't even make a movie with the movie camera because it is so slow. It's better to use my laptop computer in my classroom and show something to entertain them. I agree that schools should reflect changing literacy practice, but look at my school — its appearance seems stuck in the 19th century. Besides, I must be very cautious to give students assignments related to technology. Although this school is located in a rich area, some students may not have access to a computer at home. Just ordinary assignments can be a burden to some households.

She hinted that there was a high possibility to transfer to a new school equipped with new technology and brand new facilities. "Then," she noted, "I may teach multimodal composition, creating lesson plans so that students can experience reading and writing using different modes." However, "it might be difficult to make students focus on the target tasks. There are so many interesting sources on the Internet. There would be no way to restrict their use of sites to educational sites." She believed that middle school students were so young that they lacked self-control.

A major drawback was lack of training to learn new literacies and teach them. She became a teacher the same year she graduated from university. As a novice teacher, during the past four years she reported spending all her energy as well as time just "surviving." She indicated that she taught English 21 hours per week, and when she was not teaching

classes, she was either doing lesson planning or catching up with paperwork. “I don’t even have time to go to the restroom. Or time to drink a cup of coffee.” Having acknowledged the importance of new technology and skills reflecting social needs and student interests, she confessed that, “It is hard to find time for myself. I am flat tired when school is over.” She also believed that some private institutes students are attending offer lessons using multimodal composition (e.g. online homework) She said, “Frankly, public school cannot compete with private institutes. They invest a lot of money in buying hardware and software to attract students. Students learn online and offline, and the classrooms are systematically managed by tutors based on the students’ performance. Students think they can learn more outside the classroom.”

The challenges she faced did not necessarily mean she only relied on traditional methods. She actually implemented writing activities using multimodality to engage students’ active participation and to spark their interest in writing. However, she knew that the parents’ and students’ greatest need was to improve the students’ reading scores so that they had a better chance to apply for high schools with a reputation with academic excellence. The school culture emphasizing academic performance affected her attitudes on teaching multimodal composition in that she passively accepted the pedagogy of new literacies. That is, she minimized chances for students to present and produce multimodal texts during regular class hours, in spite of being encouraged to generate dynamic texts (especially using technology) in afterschool programs or summer camps where both teachers and students were undeterred by assessment and its results.

She indicated she had somewhat cautious perceptions regarding teaching and assessing multimodal composition because of the academic oriented school culture. In the beginning of the semester, she made a variety of lessons to attract students’ attention, but she returned immediately to traditional teaching methods such as translation and lecturing. One big problem was the class size. Because this school is popular among parents, the number of students was increasing every year. Also, she always had to use the first 3-5 minutes out of the total 45 minutes to make the students be quiet. She said:

> You cannot do anything with 30 students. They are so wild and noisy. I would yell at least for 5 minutes before the class. I use up all my energy to shut them up. What can I do next? I only have 40 minutes to teach. Usually, you know, school is full of schedules for every semester. If I do not teach lessons, I may not cover all the content for exams. Then, I will get calls complaining about my irresponsibility. I’d better become a strict teacher rather than a nice teacher. Sometimes, I would include writing lessons, but I couldn’t give them feedback. I teach five classes with a total of 150 students. I collect papers and grade them, that’s all. Even grading takes a whole week.

The school culture put a lot of pressure on Teacher 1, especially because English is the one of the major subjects on the examination. Also, she preferred teaching materials which had similar formats to the actual English exam portions of the tests. She was also concerned about assessment if she taught multimodal composition. She explained that, “I have not updated my knowledge since I graduated from university. Now, I am used to teaching in this way. Students think I am a good teacher because I teach what they want to learn. Multimodal composition? I don’t know how I will do it. Although I am young at my school, I don’t know how to use technology except basic ones.”

2) Teachers’ Perceived External and Internal Barriers: Case 2 - Teacher 2

School 2 is surrounded by an industrial complex and, like school 1, is not equipped with up-to-date facilities. The area where the school is located also has older development and a serious issue of industrial pollution. Most parents are working at the complex, earning less than the average Korean workers’ salary. Some students come from multi-cultural families or a single-parent home. Therefore, both parents and students depend on the school for their information about universities and exams. Due to parents’ long working hours, the school functions as a child-care center, with more than half the students attending after-school programs. Like any other high school, this school puts an emphasis on high-stake tests for universities, which affects the content of courses. Teacher 2 said, “My students’ English may not be good, but they want to enter universities. They may not go to great schools because they are not high performing students.” To help them get good grades in English, the teacher focuses on teaching reading with test materials made by EBS (Educational Broadcasting System). Since the Korea Institute of Curriculum & Evaluation’s 2010 announcement that 70 percent of English texts on the Korean SAT would come from textbooks made by EBS, she said, “EBS textbooks are a bible for anyone who takes the standardized test. If students are good at English, I will provide more challenging materials along with various activities, but for my students, EBS textbooks are just fine.” Students know that as long as they study with these books, they will be able to get high grades in English. However, the number of EBS texts is up to eleven books, which are hard to read in a month or two. “Students actually study with the books all the year round. What else they can do?” According to her explanation, EBS textbooks include preparations for two types of questions: reading passages and related comprehension questions, and listening comprehension tests. Such pressure coming from outside makes it difficult for her to design her class. “I am merely a teacher who should follow this kind of trend, I mean, the national trend.”

In spite of the heavy focus on teaching reading, the school tried to take a new approach to improving reading and writing skills. The school, funded by Provincial Offices of

Education, in 2014 ran a reading program called “Ask Aesop,” whose purpose was to encourage students to read English stories by Aesop. Her students would choose and read one Aesop’s fable each week without any pressure of exams. By the end of the semester, groups of students made small books with illustrations, referring to the stories they read throughout the semester. Their books were displayed on the hallway for everyone to look at, and the best books were chosen by teachers as well as peers. The project was a small part of their learning, but she felt it was something positive for both the students and herself. She said:

> I hope students learn why they are studying. The reasons can be to get good grades, go to good schools and get white-collar jobs, or get out of this area, but this project makes them think examinations cannot be the sole reason to study. It lets them know EBS textbooks are not the only English books. Reading education is actually very good. Why not? Good reading habits will make your life richer. The problem was tests are spoiling our good intentions by narrowing the curriculum. My students really liked reading Aesop’s fables and liked writing the books. I am glad students think English is not a boring subject. For myself, this project helped me open my mind. I have regular meetings every week with my colleagues to talk about how we run this program. We are thinking how can this program go nicely with the test-oriented school culture? I think this kind of meeting with teachers close to me is far more helpful than going to graduate school. We cannot go to higher education whenever we need to update our knowledge, right? I actually learn a lot when I meet my teacher colleagues. We talk about problems and try to find ways to fix them. I feel I learn a lot and get more confidence in teaching.

Teacher 2 felt that external barriers such as school culture and lack of resources helped her develop a sense of a crisis to be overcome. Although she acknowledged that she was not confident in using technology and was not inclined to integrate technology-rich projects in her lessons, she could develop more content and pedagogical knowledge by sharing ideas with other teachers. One specific example was about procedures regarding teaching materials. She typically followed the teaching sequence indicated in the EBS books, but now tried to guide students by adapting materials or by presenting issues to be personally meaningful to students. Teaching multimodal composition, she believed, could be a way to make her lessons interesting and meaningful. “I think students seem to understand better by reorganizing and rewriting stories based on the original stories. I may not teach multimodal composition throughout the semester. But I am sure that it provides a new understanding of content and specific concepts, which can be hard to obtain in such

negative school cultures in Korea. You know, in Korea, we have high academic expectations toward students."

3) Teachers' Perceived External and Internal Barriers: Case 3 - Teacher 3

For Teacher 3, the biggest challenge was to persuade other teachers to be more creative in teaching and learning. He said about his school culture, "For me, our school is like the military. Maybe because my school is an all-boys' school, we develop a kind of culture like a military." Accordingly, diversity does not exist in the curriculum, disciplines, teaching materials, and teaching methods. After establishing the yearly plan in the beginning of the semester, it is hard to change it in mid-semester. Although some lessons or assessment methods might need to be changed, teachers stuck to a longstanding custom. He explained:

> My colleagues think I make the situation complicated when I request some changes in teaching and assessment. They don't care about any change because it makes them tired. If we changed the test materials, we also would have to choose different types of assessment. They maintain that students will graduate next year, so they may not want any change, either. Other teachers think project types of classes are not appropriate for high school seniors because of difficulties in grading. Besides, the vice-principal does not like group projects because it can disrupt other classes. He always worries about the academic environment. For him, making noise equals playing, not studying.

Without the mutual consent of all teachers, he rarely had discretionary power over his classes. He admitted that he looked like a teaching robot due to the constraints of teaching in the test-oriented culture of Korea. He added, "We establish a mutual agreement on every trifle. For example, how often will we give students prep time for essay exams? Or when? How many feedbacks will we provide students? How many print materials will we give students? Obviously, we should give all students the same amount of time for writing exams." Teachers have no choice but to do this because students respond sensitively to test results. Therefore, they try to narrow the gap between high and low scores; otherwise, they may have to defend their grading to every student who is not satisfied with their results. He believed such writing assessment policy as is conducted in his school negatively affects the quality of students' writing. Students chose to write the simplest sentences possible to reduce mistakes. In spite of shared sets of standards, the rubric is less valid as a measure for assessing students' essays in that its language is too vague to illustrate criteria. In the case of Teacher 3, his perception about teaching multimodal composition has changed from

very positive to a more neutral attitude because of the external barriers he has experienced. After experiencing several stages of hope, anger, and frustration, he took a more conservative view on teaching and learning.

To enter universities, students must excel in both the Korean SAT and school grades. While school grades include writing grades, the Korean SAT does not have essay sections. As described above, while writing did not make an appreciable difference in overall scores because score gaps between students were minimal, reading scores had the assessment function to discriminate between high and low performing students. The biggest challenge he faced was to impress on students the importance of writing, in spite of its having less emphasis on exams. He often has intimidated students into writing English, believing that, "It takes time and effort to reach a certain level of language proficiency. At first, it can be boring, and painful. We cannot master language without going through a long period of suffering. Now, reading seems to be more important, but I try to talk about the importance of writing as well. When they recognize its importance, they may have a strong internal motivation to write well someday."

4) Teachers' Perceived External and Internal Barriers: Case 4 - Teacher 4

Teacher 4 experienced repeated trial and error when he made short video clips for his flipped class. The obstacle he has experienced so far is having to spend too much time preparing for classes. Lessons took place online and offline at the same time. For online classes, he used an i-Pad to make lecture videos. At first, it took him 1-2 hours to make each 10-minute video lecture, due to technical problems. In the interview, he said, "There are tons of websites about recording lectures or making video clips, but you can't master these skills without doing this." He found available sources from his colleagues, friends, and even friends of friends, but his most convenient and reliable source was the Internet, which provided a wealth of information within a short period of time. He is also a member of an online teacher community to exchange ideas about teaching and assessment. He stated, "I leave questions online, and someone responds to me immediately. That's the way I learned skills from experienced teachers." Most of all, he needed to minimize the use of the Internet in class due to the fact that he could not use Wi-Fi, and, as a result, he tried not to depend on real-time streaming protocol during school hours.

For the offline class, he made a variety of worksheets that helped reinforce student learning. Making the worksheets was as time-consuming as making the lecture videos, because he adapted materials in accordance with the contents of the video-clips. Since these did not already exist, he had to do it for every lesson, starting from scratch. To prepare for his English class, he made worksheets for individuals and groups, for grammar, reading, writing, and review.

> For the first few weeks, I don't know how I made all these worksheets. I literally worked like a slave day and night. It may be a piece of paper for the students, but I put too much energy into making supplementary materials to make my class run smoothly. There were also documents to deal with on my desk. I regret starting this kind of project. It was too much work for a single teacher to do. I wish I had someone to share this work. I did it alone, anyway. I felt some responsibility to try the flipped class in my school for the first time and to make it successful. I am afraid to quit, and should keep going on. Now, it takes less time than before because I made templates for the worksheets. Now, I just fill the contents into these formats.

Another challenge was to motivate students who did not have any desire to study English. He saw the worksheets falling on the floor and being stepped on. His heart was broken to see the crumpled pieces of paper. He said, "I made this worksheet without taking any rest between classes, because it's important to me, but not to them." Indeed, it was not simple to promote their internal motivation in a situation where their English proficiency was too low to enjoy the English subject. His students may not have as much pressure regarding high-stake tests as peer students attending regular high school, but they have different pressures regarding getting a job.

5) Teachers' Perceived External and Internal Barriers: Case 5 - Teacher 5

Teacher 5, like Teachers 1, 2, 3 and 4, regarded the school culture emphasizing examinations as the number one obstacle to spending more time teaching writing. He described this as "crisis of writing" in that people do not write any more. He believed, "In order to write well, we should read more." Nowadays, people do not read books any more. His assumption is based on the idea that, as people have more chances to see something, they are likely to do it. For example, he mentioned the population that enjoyed dancing increased dramatically due to an increase of people enjoying watching music videos. However, he stated that students do not read books with texts of any considerable length. At the most, they read brief texts consisting of six or seven sentences whereby it is hard to have much relationship with these texts. Without having much experience reading books, students may not develop writing proficiency, in that writing is an attempt to connect the inside with the outside world. For him, students seemed to learn reading skills but did not actually read books.

He believed that meaningful learning did not occur because students were accustomed to reading short passages. Besides, they had a hard time writing a paragraph of much length due to lack of reading, writing and thinking. When students were asked to submit a

finished paper by the end of semester, at least a third did copy and paste from someone else's writing from Internet. He was shocked to hear students' excuses, saying they did not know what to write. The assignment was to draw a cluster diagram to explore ideas about conditions of ideal partners. They were fine in making the diagram with several potential ideas, but failed to transform their lists into meaningful writing. He explained, "Actually, these students' Korean writing was problematic, too. My colleague, a Korean teacher, also said that students' writing is limited to exchanging text messages. Their writing looks like talking. We cannot have a higher expectation for their English writing, considering even their Korean writing is not great." He felt that writing education cannot be successful without structural changes in assessment. Not until writing assessment is on a par with that of other subjects will writing education assume greater importance in the school curriculum. In the current situation where assessment often involves some mechanical or tricky questions, he maintained that meaningful learning either of reading or writing cannot occur.

6) Teachers' Perceived External and Internal Barriers: Case 6 - Teacher 6

Teacher 6 agreed that there were both external and internal barriers to teaching multimodal composition in a Korean context. She did not think she could overcome external barriers in any way. Instead, she thought that she had better focus on internal barriers to guide writing education toward a better direction.

> At first, I am afraid I can't. But, I am quite realistic. I am a mere teacher, how can we fight against a nation with enormous power? I agree educational systems are problematic, but I know it's impossible to change it by myself. The middle ground for me is to acknowledge the current educational system whether it is wrong or not. Then, try to experiment within boundaries. Use all my power to work normally. One thing I did in my classroom was to give students perfect scores for their essay exams. I provide unconditional praise for their efforts. If students raise their hands, I give them extra credit. I write everything they did on their cumulative records. I even made titles such as "golden hands" and "best contributors" and selected students to be given these titles. In the case of "best contributor," we vote for one who provides help, not for one who is smart.

For her, it was more important for students to write more without fear of grades, and to follow every step guided by the teacher. The teacher helped students generate ideas and write what they think by asking instigating questions. She believed that students would not

be able to write if they did not contemplate their life seriously. In a sense, teachers should take a responsibility to make students ponder over life issues.

> You know, it is my duty to stimulate students' desire to write and to make them express their emotions. Another duty is to encourage them. They all are such diligent students. They have stress, too, but different types of stress. Although individual students are excellent, they think their friends are better than them. So, criticizing students may not work in this school. I sympathize with them, like telling them that I'm also an English language learner. I tell them we all are English language learners. We may not master the language like native English speakers, but making an effort is worth more than anything else. Here, they are great students not because I am a good teacher, but because they have internal engines. Unless they stop the engines, someone should emphasize to them that kids need to stop for a moment.

In fact, in the past Teacher 6 was reluctant to teach writing for several reasons. The biggest reason was that she herself was a second language learner, lacking confidence in teaching English. She said, "Frankly speaking, I am confused over when I should use "a" or "the" in writing. Reading? It's fine. I only follow line-by-line and translate the sentences into Korean. But writing? Oh my! I was not confident in teaching writing." However, she used her weakness as a strength in that she could provide effective support to her students.

V. DISCUSSION

1. Accept or Reject Multimodal Composition as an Ongoing Learning Process

As indicated above, two types of assessment were conducted in school: multiple-choice tests and essay examinations. Some teachers, such as Teachers 4 and 6, used the essay exams to their advantage by having students practice writing in advance for the essay questions and providing students time for both writing and evaluating their work during language class. These two teachers did not grade students' essays based on English proficiency, in spite of institutional pressures that teachers should evaluate and grade student writing (Inoue, 2004). For them, conducting essay exams provided opportunities to give feedback and discuss content and issues through teacher-student talks in the classroom. Leung and Mohan (2004) suggest that formative assessment is a pedagogically desirable approach to promote learning. It can be powerful because assessment is integrated into

teaching and learning activities on a daily basis. For Teachers 4 and 6, learning occurred via assessment or through interactions between teacher and students, also between students and other students (Black, 2009).

One of the writing lessons assigned by Teacher 6 asked students to create a dialog about resolving disputes. In groups, students exchanged ideas by discussing the best solutions to conflict situations. According to Teacher 6, the students not only practiced using English expressions, but also learned to think from various perspectives by being involved in this language game. By contrast, Teacher 4 did not use much teacher-student discussion due to his students' lack of English proficiency, but used essay exams to reflect what students understood from reading texts. He did not provide individualized feedback, which might have overwhelmed his students, but used his feedback to praise their efforts. Regarding writing assessment criteria, Teacher 4 included multimodal domains because, in any text, various modes were interwoven, contributing to socially constructed meanings (Ryan, 2011). Students drew traditional Korean clothing, chefs, and cameras to refer to fashion, cooking, and film school, while providing descriptions of the curricula for each school. These various modes allowed the students to read words in multiple ways (Thompson, 2008). Although Teacher 4's students could not describe what they read in complete sentences, drawing was an indirect method that allowed the teacher to infer students' understanding of the text.

Teachers conducted essay exams more than once during the semester, which meant some teachers used the tests as an ongoing learning process. Although teachers did not usually give students individual feedback, they provided group comments to all students on how to organize their papers or how to reduce grammatical mistakes. The teachers also believed that essay exams better showed students' strengths and weaknesses compared with multiple-choice exams. This was because students were likely to guess answers from multiple-choice options, whereas essay exams provided no clues for writing correct sentences. Although teachers assigned homework to complete essays at home, they asked students to initiate the first draft at school. By so doing, they could observe students' current state of writing proficiency and provide guidance and instructions if necessary. In the case of Teacher 1, she created essay questions that were similar to multiple-choice exams because she believed that the rubric for scoring writing was not objective. Also, she did not wish to hear complaints from parents and students about test results. As a result, she was more likely than other teachers to emphasize the domains of structure and conventions in order to make the scoring process easier and faster. For such teachers, teaching writing could not be regarded as a learning process, but as a process for testing.

The teachers said they wished to increase the number of essay tests in order to improve productive skills. All reported that students did not develop receptive skills (e.g., reading and listening) and productive skills (e.g., speaking and writing) in a balanced way because

of the emphasis on reading comprehension. Insufficient time was spent on teaching writing or speaking because productive skills were of little importance in high-stakes tests. In addition to the emphasis on reading, the teachers' lack of confidence in their ability to teach writing was an obstacle to the integration of multimodal composition in English classes. As English language learners themselves, they lacked confidence in their English skills, specifically in writing. They expressed concern about making mistakes in front of students. In particular, Teacher 6 indicated that, as a second language learner herself, she was apprehensive about providing writing instruction at the beginning of her career. Her perceptions on multimodal composition as an ongoing learning process changed from negative to positive when she recognized the advantages to non-native language teachers. Medgyes (2001) indicated that non-native teachers set a better learner model, whereas native teachers can be a better language model. Therefore, Korean English teachers can be a better role model for learners since they exhibit varying degrees of teaching skills gained from their trial and error experiences. Because they understand language difficulties better than anyone else, they are "potentially more sensitive to students' needs and aspirations including their linguistic, cultural, and personal background" (p. 438). Thus, teachers can make the learning process more transparent so that students are capable of gleaning information about studying English.

Along with a second language identity, most teachers reported that it was an overwhelming task to make writing lessons an ongoing process. Multimodal composition is continuous or ongoing in nature because the process of meaning-making using multiple modes is not a fixed process (Kress, 2010). Meanings become concrete in relation to interwoven texts over time and reproduced in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts (Kress, 2010). Thus, teachers need to create more flexible lessons to reflect the nature of multimodality rather than lessons limited to one-time use. When multiple stages are used to teach writing, they may provide students the experience of particular modes and their social and cultural practices. One challenge that can interfere with employing multimodal lesson plans is insufficient time to teach a writing lesson in several units. As described in the previous paragraphs, more emphasis has been placed on reading and listening, leaving the teaching of writing to a one-time event.

Some teachers' attitudes toward the issue of multimodality as a management tool are complicated and inconsistent due to the different uses and perceptions of multimodal composition. Teacher 4 believed that multimodal lessons facilitated effective teaching by providing a variety of semiotic resources that could raise interest and curiosity. A number of positive changes were observed when he provided video lessons that students could study in advance. His multimodal lessons helped students gain familiarity with the material and also helped him monitor their work and behavior. He reported frequent use of multiple modes also allowed students to present their ideas in multiple ways, building their

confidence in using English. Teacher use of multiple modes such as eye contact and nonverbal signals, on the other hand, could create conditions that prevent misbehavior in students. For Teachers 1 and 3, teaching multimodal composition did not ensure effective classroom management. Rather, group or pair assignments that were supported by multimodal projects could make it harder for teachers to organize and implement instruction unless there were effective group management methods to encourage student engagement and fair ways to assess their academic or non-academic tasks. For both groups of teachers, multimodal composition lessons were likely to be accepted or avoided as an ongoing process because of classroom management issues.

Teachers mentioned lack of time and insufficient opportunities for professional development as obstacles to implementing multimodal composition over the period of a semester. All teachers indicated that daily responsibilities such as dealing with official documents and counseling students interfered with their professional teaching activities. As Teacher 1 complained, teachers did not even have time to handle all the tasks, so they tried to do all these administrative chores outside of regular school hours. In the current situation, where teachers are suffering from an excessive workload, it is hard for them to find time to make lesson plans conducive to meeting social and individual needs. Teachers' inconsistent attitudes toward teaching and assessing multimodal composition, therefore, can be affected by such educational conditions.

2. Creating a Learning Community: Need for Professional Development

All teachers reported that they wished to update their knowledge in accordance with social changes and students' needs. Four of the six teachers had completed master's programs in English or English education. Their attitudes toward attending graduate school were moderately skeptical. Teacher 3 indicated that two years at graduate school had helped him to understand the issues and trends of academia, but that he could not pursue degrees whenever he wished to increase his knowledge or skills. Teacher 6, who had a master's degree in English education, stated that completing this degree did have a positive impact on getting a sustainable job but did not help her build a practical knowledge of teaching pedagogy. She identified classroom-based experiences, based on trial and error, as a critical factor in prompting her to reflect on her teaching practices, find solutions, and modify her current teaching practices. These teachers' attitudes toward professional development in graduate school were consistent with Swan et al.'s report (2002) that traditional in-service teacher education was less likely to affect teaching practice than onsite professional development. They suggested that professional development should be "situative," taking the specific physical and social contexts into account. In the same vein, Putnam and Borko (1997) maintained that the essential feature of effective professional

development programs was situated knowledge and practice in an authentic classroom. All teacher participants in the current study agreed that creating a learning community within the school could be more efficient and effective for teacher training.

Teachers talked about participating in a learning community to help them cope with challenges or barriers in teaching writing. In Korea, teachers in the same grades typically agree to use the same criteria in order to make sure all students are treated fairly. In fact, it is impossible for teachers to create criteria without the consent of their colleagues, even if certain teaching/assessment methods work better to address students' needs. All teachers in the current study indicated the importance of creating or participating in a learning community with other teachers who were supportive and could help them improve their content as well as their pedagogical knowledge. Teacher 2 regularly met with colleagues to monitor the reading and writing programs and to discuss ways, either formally or informally, to improve their direction. She stated that the learning community in her school allowed teachers to share their visions of change and to learn from each other. For her, onsite professional development meetings like these were more likely to provide sustainable learning to increase teaching expertise and confidence (Kennedy & Shiel, 2010). Based on what she learned in this community, she could make critical decisions suitable to particular contexts and to the development of her students.

In all of these cases, the teachers acted upon their desire for professional development through self-directed collaborations. All of the teachers perceived that they worked better collaboratively than alone in learning additional teaching strategies, approaches to lessons, and values with respect to multimodal composition. By so doing, they recognized that the multimodal environment was essential in order to understand the new conditions for literacy inside and beyond the classroom. At the same time, different mindsets and levels of skills are required to carry out multimodal composition lessons, so high levels of cooperation, whether formal or informal, are needed in pursuit of pedagogical innovation. Teachers 2 and 6 reported that teachers could develop both content and pedagogical knowledge by making connections with other teachers. For example, as members of consulting teams in provincial offices of education tasked with providing help to regular teachers across schools, they collected information such as lesson plans and teaching materials, observed classrooms, and had professional dialogs with the requestors to see if instructional changes could be implemented to help enhance teacher expertise. Of critical importance was the building of collaborative relationships between the consultants and the teachers who received consulting. Teacher 6 indicated that she did not "teach" teaching techniques, but rather, through numerous conversations, helped teachers "realize" effective teachings methods that were relevant to their particular contexts. She introduced several good examples which teachers subsequently used as models. Although this consulting differed from an in-school learning community in that each consultant contacted only one

teacher, it had a positive impact on other teachers. Those who received consulting returned to their colleagues to share practical solutions and to continue the conversation on better practices.

Teachers 4 and 5 exchanged teaching methods, skills, and ideas on an individual level. Both were interested in integrating technology into their English classrooms. They did not have regular meetings like Teacher 2, but used Facebook to post questions and answers. This online space actually provided a useful and practical place for professional development where they could deepen their knowledge of technology and teaching. Teacher 5 indicated that, although the conversation seemed casual, it was filled with insightful ideas that could be put into practice at the classroom level. The teachers also chose particular websites or reading materials to share ideas that suggested reading and writing strategies or supported the use of technology. Kennedy and Shiel (2010) found that professional reading materials created a state of "cognitive dissonance" that allowed teachers to reflect on their current methods and beliefs about teaching. In their interviews for the current study, both Teachers 4 and 5 appeared open-minded about filling gaps in their knowledge and attempting to learn new skills, especially in relation to technology. In other words, taking time to share ideas and read new materials allowed both teachers to observe their teaching practices and to transfer knowledge in ways that fit their teaching and personal styles.

VI. CONCLUSION

In anticipation of finding empirical results on teaching and assessing multimodal composition, and on related challenges or barriers, six selected cases involving six public schools in a metropolitan area of South Korea were studied. Since the purpose of the current study was to explore teachers' use of multimodality in writing classrooms, this study described teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward multimodal composition and the challenges they perceived when teaching and assessing multimodal composition. The results revealed that all teachers agreed they needed to be sensitive to the changed environment and to reconsider using only traditional teaching methods. At the same time, they expressed concerns about adopting multimodal composition, citing both external and internal barriers. External barriers such as the prevalence of high-stakes tests, not enough time to prepare original classroom materials, and the lack of teacher training in technology and new pedagogies were major obstacles to their conducting multimodal lessons. For the most part, school resources and efforts are directed to increasing students' English scores in all-important tests that can determine students' future educational opportunities. Second, internal barriers, including teachers' pedagogical knowledge and attitudes toward teaching

and assessing multimodal composition prevent teachers from adopting multimodality in their writing classroom.

The findings of the study have implications not only for educators and administrators but also for parents and students. As Teacher 6 and others acknowledged, teachers may not change the educational system in Korea, but they can take a more active role in terms of choosing learning materials, methods, and assessment so that students become more responsible for their own learning. Specifically, teachers can place greater emphasis on process over final results. Assessment for Learning (AFL) can be an example to connect teaching to learning in order that assessment is used to provide information about learners' progress (Lee, 2007).

A number of limitations exist, in spite of the fact that this study urged educators to be awakened to the nature of communication and assessment practices in the 21st century. This study only focuses on English teachers in South Korea, where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). In an EFL setting, teachers are encouraged to focus on form and/or content because the priority of language teaching and assessment is on helping students to improve accuracy and fluency and to assess their language proficiency. In a language classroom, therefore, linguistic aspects are more important than other modes. Also, although the Korean English teachers in these case studies were selected from different public schools, they all were following an official curriculum and worked in a similar atmosphere of a competitive, test-driven, and outcome-oriented culture. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other settings where competition and the scores of standardized tests are less important.

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