

# The Effect of Learner-Centered EFL Writing Instruction on Korean University Students' Writing Anxiety and Perception

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## Abstract

The current educational trend strongly encourages students' active participation in learning. However, EFL writing instructions in Korea are so far detached from this approach. That is, most English writing classes in Korea are still teacher-centered and most learners remain passive throughout the classroom period. In order to bring about change in the classroom atmosphere and to foster active student engagements in the EFL writing class, the current study developed a learner-centered instruction model for EFL writing based on the relevant literatures. Specifically, the model incorporated four activities which inevitably triggered the learners' participations in the writing process: modified LDF (Learner-Driven Feedback), portfolio, peer feedback, and group writing. Then, its effect on students' anxiety and perception was solicited via surveys and in-depth interviews. The participants of the study were 29 Korean university students enrolled in Practical English Writing course in the spring semester, 2018. The paired t-test on pre- and post- writing anxiety showed that the model was effective in significantly decreasing students' writing anxiety, particularly, somatic anxiety. Moreover, the students' perception on the learner-centered writing instruction model turned out to be quite positive in the order of LDF (4.69), portfolio (3.93), peer feedback (3.62), and group writing (3.34). The contribution of the study is discussed in relation to cultural issues (e.g. Confucianism) and its pedagogical implications.

**Keywords:** learner-centered, EFL writing instruction, writing anxiety, student perception.

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## Introduction

In Korea, English is a high stakes subject which is closely related to entering prestigious university and getting a decent job. However, not much attention was paid to developing English writing skills in comparison to developing other English language skills such as listening, speaking, or reading. Perhaps this may be due to the test system in Korea which mainly assesses listening or reading comprehension. Nevertheless, as a global citizen, English writing competence is of great importance in academic settings as well as in professional workplaces. Yet, many English learners feel more stress and face more challenges in promoting writing compared to other English language skills. Until now, teacher's corrective feedback has been utilized as a major means to improving students' writing skills. However, the research thus far has shown conflicting results regarding the effect of corrective feedback on ESL/EFL writing (Chandler, 2003; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Ferris, 2004). This may be owing to the difference in the contextual variables: the learner, the situation, and the instructional methodology (Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Wolfersberger, 2010).

Moreover, the current educational trend strongly encourages students' active participation in learning. Thus, relying solely on the teacher's corrective feedback is somewhat going against the current educational movement. Unfortunately, however, this is still happening in EFL writing instruction in Korea. That is, most English writing classes in Korea are still teacher-centered and most learners remain passive throughout the classroom period. The main features of English writing classes can be summarized as one-shot' writing using a product-oriented approach and no use or very limited use of self- and peer assessment, which makes it very difficult for students to assume responsibility for their own learning (Mak & Lee, 2014).

In order to bring about change in the inactive classroom atmosphere as well as to foster dynamic student engagements

and learner autonomy in the EFL writing class, the current study developed a learner-centered instruction model for EFL writing based on the relevant literatures. Specifically, the model incorporated four activities which inevitably triggered the learners' participations in the writing process: modified LDF (Learner-driven Feedback), portfolio, peer feedback, and group writing as shown in Figure 1.

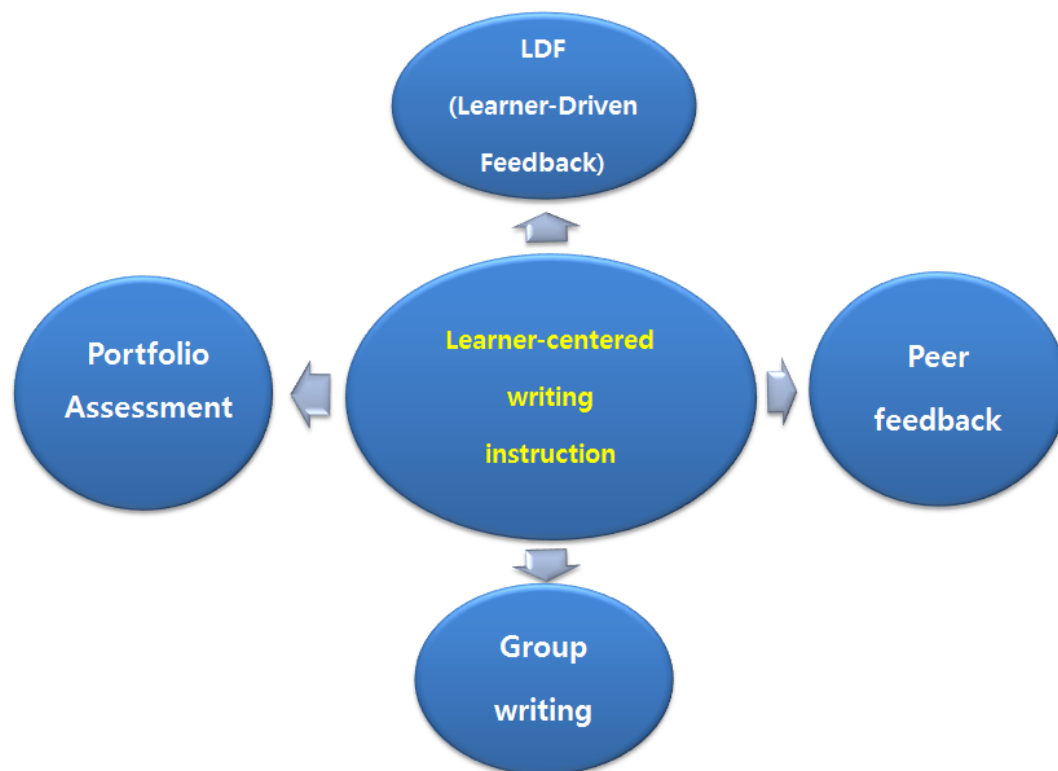


Figure 1. Learner-centered writing instruction model

However, many current English methodologies mentioned above are oriented towards English language education in ESL settings such as UK, Australia, and North America (Holliday, 1994). Therefore, we need to identify what teaching methodologies work best within Korean social and academic contexts (Kim & Kim, 2005). The research question of the current study is formulated as follows.

1. Is learner-centered writing instruction effective in reducing Korean university students' writing anxiety?
2. What are the Korean university students' perceptions of learner-centered writing instruction?

### Literature Review

#### *EFL writing instructional methods*

Through the analysis of 55 research articles on English L2 writing, teacher feedback, self-regulatory learning, peer feedback, and technology use were identified to be effective English L2 writing interventions (Chae, 2012). Up to now, however, the most frequent teaching method for EFL writing has been the teacher's corrective written feedback. This may be due to the fact that the interest of both teacher and students coincide: Teachers think that it's crucial part of their job to correct students' errors, while students, at the same time, are willing to receive feedback from the teacher to improve their writings (Simpson, 2006). Moreover, teacher's corrective feedback can benefit students as a comprehensible input which may lead to output and language learning (Ellis, 2008). Recently, however, other diverse types of feedbacks are being introduced to supplement teacher's written feedback such as self-assessment, peer group feedback, and student-teacher conferencing (Gao, 2007).

Portfolio is generally viewed as a feasible substitute for product-based writing assessment (Belanoff & Dickson,

1991). One of its advantages is that it can work as a catalyst in developing students' self-regulatory learning (Mak & Wong, 2017). In contrast to product-based writing which emphasizes the final written product, portfolio underscores learners' active involvement in their own writing as they go through several stages of the writing process (Badger & White, 2000; Gao, 2007; Kaur & Chun, 2005). As a result, learner independence and self-reflective capacity can be developed (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000).

Nowadays, peer feedback is becoming more and more popular in English writing classrooms (Yeh, 2018). A number of benefits in peer feedback were suggested from previous studies. First, students can learn from each other based on their different areas of strengths and weakness (Min, 2005). Also, Peer feedback activities are helpful for development of greater autonomy in writing (Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006). Finally, a student's writing competence develops more while giving feedback to others rather than by receiving feedback from others (Lundstrom & Baker, 2008). However, peer feedback is not without any weakness. The most common drawbacks of peer feedback are lacking in quality compared to teacher feedback (Yang, et al., 2006; Young & Miller, 2004).and insufficient openness among students (Bijami, Kashef, & Nejad, 2013).

Learner-driven feedback (Maas, 2017) is a good example of technology use in EFL writing. Various forms of technology such as, e-mail, audio or video recording can be used upon students' request in giving feedbacks. What is more, learners 'drive' the feedback dialogue by asking for specific information they want to know. That is, the feedback is given by the teacher, but the learners decide how and on what they receive feedback; they can choose between various formats (e.g. handwritten, e-mail, audio recording) and pose questions about their work (grammar, vocabulary, organization, etc.). Since learners respond more enthusiastically to feedback that they regard as valuable and useful (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), only questions asked by the students are answered. However, a potential problem exists in learner-driven feedback: students may lack ability to pinpoint their own shortcomings.

Finally, group writing or collaborative writing is a useful writing activity to promote students' cooperation in the process of language learning. Although, the concept sounds intuitively appealing, the research finding on the effectiveness of group writing in Korean context is, yet, inconclusive. The positive outcome was that collaborative writing developed Korean high school students' writing ability, confidence, motivation, and interest in English (Lee & Lee, 2014). However, the negative result was also found: Korean university students preferred individual work to pair or group work (Jong, 2016). More studies are needed either to confirm or to refute the findings.

#### *Writing anxiety*

The importance of affective factors, such as learner attitudes, anxiety, and motivation, have been emphasized in explaining learner responses and uptake of the teacher feedback being provided (Bruton, 2009; Horwitz, 2010; Hyland, 1998; Lee, Given & Schallert, 2008; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010). The debilitating influence of anxiety on second or foreign language learning, in particular, is firmly grounded on research evidence (Daubney, Gkonou, & Dewaele, 2017; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). However, a majority of research into foreign language anxiety has focused on its relationship to speaking skills (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Phillips, 1992; Woodrow, 2006). The influence of anxiety on listening (Kim, 2000), reading (Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999), and writing, on the other hand, has been comparatively less explored.

Previous studies found negative association of writing anxiety with self-efficacy and writing performance (Kwon, 2017; Piniel & Csizer, 2015; Woodrow, 2011). For example, Kwon (2017)'s survey on 100 Korean university students residing in Seoul and Kyunggi province discovered that the students with lower writing anxiety performed better. Thus, it was suggested that the English teacher should provide student-centered learning environment to reduce students' writing anxiety and to boost students' autonomy. Providing writing conferences and cooperative writing were proposed as effective means to reduce students' anxiety. However, it should be reminded that the previous research was based on survey not on the teaching experiment. Further experimental research is necessary to substantiate the findings.

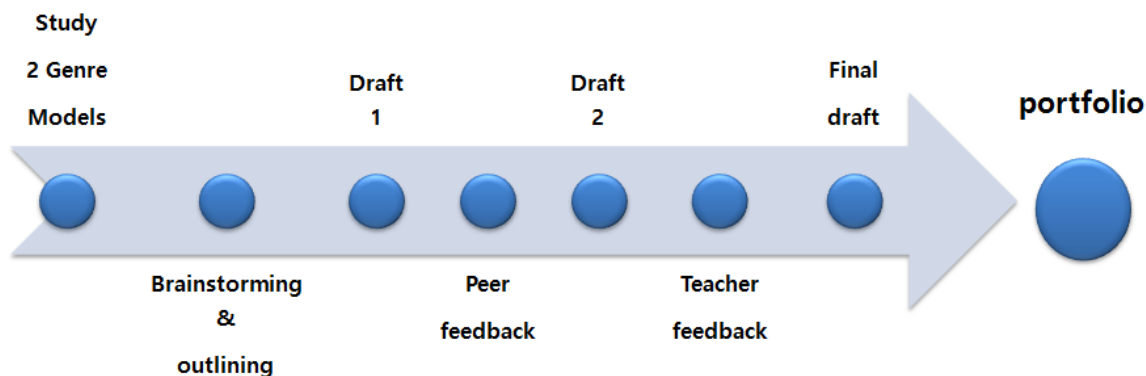
## Methods

### *Research context and participants*

The participants of the study were 29 Korean university students enrolled in *Practical English Writing* course in spring semester, 2018. The class consisted of 18 male students and 11 female students. The participants were quite heterogeneous with regard to their majors, years, and English proficiency. First, they were from 24 different majors including engineering, business, education and human arts. Also, the class was composed of different college years: 10 freshman, 11 sophomores, 3 juniors, and 5 seniors. Finally, their TOEIC scores showed a great variation ranging from 435 to 930. Only 2 students had previously taken a class related to English writing. Thus, this class was the first English writing class for the majority of the participants.

### *Procedures*

The main objective of *Practical English Writing* course was to develop academic writing skills in English. The students were required to attend the class three hours per week during the semester. They learned how to write 5 different genre of writing during the semester: descriptive, example, procedural, narrative, and opinion writing. The course assignments were to complete 5 different genre of writing following the process writing approach. The students had to write three drafts (i.e., first, second, and final) and keep them in their portfolio file which was to be submitted at the end of the semester. The step by step writing sequence is illustrated in Figure 2.



*Figure 2. Class procedure*

To complete each draft, students followed the four writing stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. As a central trait of process writing, this multi-draft approach helped students pay careful attention to teacher feedback more, which was thought to apply to peer feedback as well. During the prewriting stage, students were free to choose any techniques they felt useful for generating ideas such as freewriting, listing, or clustering. Using the ideas they generated, they made a brief outline and started composing their first draft (Draft 1). Students then received feedback from their peers and revised their first drafts (Draft 2).

The peer review lasted for 20 minutes during the regular class period. First, the students were distributed other student's writings. Then, the students started to read silently and individually and wrote their comments on a peer feedback sheet (Appendix A). The peer feedback form was intended to serve as a guide for students in giving feedbacks on various aspects of writing during the peer review process. After receiving their drafts, students read comments from peers and made necessary changes. Finally, the course instructor collected all the revised drafts and gave feedback to each student in the format the students requested (i.e., hand-written, video, or face-to-face). Afterwards, the students made changes to their draft based on the teacher feedback while editing minor grammar or spelling errors at the same time (Draft 3). All the drafts from Draft 1 to Draft 3 were kept in their portfolios. This process was done throughout the semester for 5 different writing genres.

### *Instruments*

#### Pre-Post survey on writing anxiety

The survey was administered twice, at the beginning and at the end of the semester to examine whether the learner-

centered instruction was effective in reducing students' writing anxiety. The survey items were adopted from Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (Cheng, 2004) which was intended to measure somatic anxiety (7 items), avoidance behavior (7 items), and cognitive anxiety (8 items). A total of 22 items were asked and students' writing anxiety was measured in 5-point Likert scale. Chronbach's  $\alpha$  was used to test the reliability of the survey items. The overall reliability of the survey items as well as the sub categorical survey items were considerably high (overall: 0.91; somatic anxiety: 0.87; avoidance behavior: 0.78; cognitive anxiety: 0.83) as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Writing anxiety survey reliability**

		Number of questions	Question Number	Reliability
Writing anxiety	Somatic anxiety	7	2,6,8,11,13,15,19	0.87
	Avoidance behavior	7	4,5,10,12,16,18,22	0.78
	Cognitive anxiety	8	1,3,7,9,14,17,20,21	0.83
	Overall	22	1-22.	0.91

Survey and follow-up interview on student perception

Also, students' perceptions of the learner-centered instruction incorporating four activities (modified LDF, portfolio, peer feedback, and group writing) were investigated through surveys and in-depth interviews. Six students who indicated different views on the survey were selected among 18 students who volunteered for the follow-up interview. To ensure anonymity of the respondents, pseudonyms (Bob, David, George, Julie, Sam, and Sarah) were used for 6 interviewees. The interview was semi-structured and each interview lasted about 60 minutes. The interview was conducted in Korean language to enable students to share their opinions freely without any language barriers. During the interview, students were asked to share their honest opinions on the following aspects: (a) the best method among four methods incorporated in the writing class and the reason for it, (b) usefulness and difficulties they experienced in learner-centered instruction, and (c) suggestions for improvement based on their experiences. Students' interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed for the subsequent analysis.

## Results and Discussion

### Writing anxiety

A paired t-test was done in order to see if any significant difference in anxiety took place after the learner-centered writing instruction. Table 2 showed decrease in all aspects of anxiety (i.e., somatic anxiety, avoidance behavior, cognitive anxiety) after the treatment. Specifically, a significant decrease took place in somatic anxiety ( $p=.02$ ) which eventually influenced in reducing overall anxiety ( $p=.04$ ).

Somatic anxiety survey items measured the degree of the participants' apprehensive physical reactions under English composition situations. The examples of somatic anxiety items were "I often feel panic when I write English compositions under time constraint", "I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English compositions", and "My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition". Therefore, learner-centered writing instruction seemed to have significantly decreased the students' fear and nervousness in English writing situations.

Avoidance behavior survey items aimed to measure the extent of students' avoidance from English writing situations. The question items included, "I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions.", "I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English.", and "I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions". Although learner-centered writing instruction reduced avoidance behavior, the difference was not significant. However, this may have something to do with Confucian culture which is considerably deep-rooted in Korean education setting. That is, students under Confucian culture, including Korean students, are educated to learn English through four R process: Reception, Repetition, Review, and Reproduction (Hu, 2002), which could



have affected students, either consciously or unconsciously, to maintain passive stance in learning.

**Table 2: Paired t-test on writing anxiety**

		M	SD	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Somatic Anxiety	Pre-survey	2.81	0.82	0.15	2.46	28	.02*
	Post survey	2.37	0.79	0.15			
Avoidance behavior	Pre-survey	2.74	0.64	0.12	1.40	28	.17
	Post survey	2.50	0.56	0.10			
Cognitive Anxiety	Pre-survey	2.83	0.80	0.15	1.54	28	.13
	Post survey	2.50	0.84	0.16			
Overall	Pre-survey	2.80	0.63	0.12	2.18	28	.04*
	Post survey	2.46	0.64	0.12			

Cognitive anxiety items estimated how much students were concerned about other people's evaluation on their English writing. The examples are as follows: "If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade", "I'm afraid that the other students would deride my English composition if they read it", and "While writing English compositions, I feel worried and uneasy if I know they will be evaluated". Learner-centered writing instruction also reduced cognitive anxiety, although not to a significant degree. Here, Korean Confucian culture, 'Che-myon' which refers to Koreans' tendency to think too much about others for the fear of losing face, seemed to have influenced the present outcome. Koreans generally tend to think that in order not to lose face, one always needs to be aware of how others perceive them (Park, 2000). Perhaps, this new teaching approach was not powerful enough or the instruction period was not long enough to bring about significant change in Korean sociocultural norm.

Finally, the follow-up interview at the end of the semester also supported that the learner-centered writing instruction was quite helpful in reducing their writing anxiety. Particularly, the writing process which made students to write a multiple drafts on a given topic aided students to gain confidence in English writing.

"This class was the first English writing class for most of the students. Naturally, most of us were quite anxious about writing in English at first. However, my writing anxiety decreased gradually as I practiced writing repeatedly again and again." (Sarah)

#### *Students' perception of learner-centered writing instruction*

When asked their preferred option among learner-centered writing instructional methods in the survey, the students favored modified Learner-driven feedback (LDF) (M=4.62) the most, followed by portfolio (M =3.93), peer feedback (M =3.62) and group writing (M =3.34) as shown in Table 3. It is interesting to note that the first two preferences (i.e., LDF and portfolio) were individual activity whereas less preferred ones (i.e., peer feedback and group writing) were group activity. Hence, Korean students' preference for individual work can be inferred. This is also confirmed by the interview.

"Before we entered university, we were trained to study and work individually (not in groups) ... most classes were teacher-centered and students hardly ever shared what they knew to others." (Julie)

Fierce competition among middle school and high school students in Korea hardly left any room for cooperation in

learning. Most interviewees noted that group work was over in their elementary school years.

“This class was the only class which involved group work in this semester. Ever since I graduated elementary school, I never had a chance to do any group work. This was my first experience after elementary school. It was kind of strange at first...” (Sam)

#### *Modified learner-driven feedback*

Overall, the students showed strong preference for modified LDF. For example, the least variation was found in LDF (SD=0.56) compared to other approaches: portfolio (SD= 0.83), peer feedback (SD=0.94), and group writing (SD=1.17). Moreover, the students’ maximum ratings were 5 for all approaches while minimum ratings were from 1 (portfolio, group writing) to 3 (LDF), which also demonstrated students’ overall strong preference for LDF. Most students thought highly of learner-driven feedback and appreciated the teacher’s novel and innovative trial on providing various forms of feedbacks.

“It was wonderful to have some choices in receiving the teacher feedback rather than having only one choice of hand-written comments.” (Julie)

**Table 3: Student preference of learner-centered writing**

	Modified LDF	Portfolio	Peer feedback	Group writing
Mean	4.62	3.93	3.62	3.34
SD	0.56	0.83	0.94	1.17
Max	5	5	5	5
Min	3	1	2	1
Median	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	5.00	4.00	3.00	4.00

Surprisingly, however, even though students showed great preference for LDF, Table 4 showed 62.1% of the total given feedbacks was traditional feedback (i.e., handwritten comments). The face-to-face feedback was the least utilized feedback among LDF options. The main reasons why many students resorted to traditional hand-written comments rather than face-to-face feedback and video feedback were the time consumption, unfamiliarity and Confucian cultural factor.

“I consider English writing course less seriously compared to the major subjects. So, instead of allocating additional time for English writing after class, I want to finish everything during the class hours.” (David)

**Table 4: Students’ preference and choice in learner-driven feedback**

Form of feedback	Preference indicated in the survey	No. of given feedbacks	Percentage (%)
Handwritten comments	14	72	62.1
Video through Email/SNS	5	29	25
Face-to-face feedback	10	15	12.9
Total	29	116	100

“I think hand-written comments are the easiest and the most convenient form of feedback. Not only for me but also

for you (the teacher)... It only takes a couple of minute for me to overview the hand-written feedback whereas extra time is needed to watch the video feedback or to see teacher in person.” (Sam)

“I think most students are not familiar with video feedback. They are not sure whether it is a communicative feedback or lecture type feedback, which may have made them to apply less. As for me, the video feedback was quite helpful. I was able to get a detailed feedback and was able to concentrate better than hand-written comments.” (Bob)

“Face-to face feedback was just too much for me. I need to set up an extra time after class to receive feedback... Also, because of Confucian culture and the teacher being the evaluator, I feel uneasiness in meeting the teacher one on one. You know. The relationship between the teacher and students is not horizontal, unlike Western culture. Even in my entire 12 years of school life, I hardly ever had face-to-face meeting with my teacher except for the final year in high school when I needed to consult the teacher on writing college application.” (Sarah)

Unlike major subjects, English writing course was one of the electives that students consider less important and thus don't want to spend much time on. Accordingly, students didn't want to spare their additional time on face-to-face conference with the teacher. Also, students tended to resort to hand-written feedback than to the video feedback due to familiarity and convenience. Finally, a cultural factor, power distance, came into play. Power distance can be defined as the degree to which inequality among people in different social positions is viewed (Hofstede, 1980). Most Confucian cultures, including Korean culture, have high power distance between teacher and students, which makes it quite uncomfortable for most students to be seated side by side and receive feedback from the teacher.

### *Portfolio*

The major benefit of using portfolio was that the students could visually identify the progress they were making. That is, they could see their drafts being improved from the first draft to the final draft. Moreover, the manifest progress was made from the first writing genre to the fifth writing genre.

“On my first writing, you commented I needed to rewrite from the very beginning. I was frustrated at that point. However, as the writing progressed, the amount of your corrective feedback became less and less... I could see that my writing was getting better and better.” (Sarah)

Another benefit was that keeping portfolio allowed students some chances to go over their drafts whenever they wanted.

“I don't know why, but I used to throw away drafts. But keeping them in file was good because I was able to refer it again and again.” (Julie)

The only drawback of portfolio was that it was easy to lose drafts, especially in group writing. Portfolio was mostly individual, but among five different genres of writings, the first two were done in groups. Some suggested handing in portfolio twice (mid-term and final) instead of once (at the end of the term) in order to prevent the loss of drafts

“If you are not really careful, you are apt to lose drafts in portfolio. In group writing, I think it's better to brainstorm together but write individually.” (David)

### *Peer feedback*

The major benefits of peer feedback were mentioned as follows: gaining different perspectives and ideas from other students, finding my own mistakes as reading other students' writing, having opportunities to read other students' writing, and learning useful vocabulary and expressions through other students' writing.

“The peer feedback was quite useful since I was able to hear ideas from others. We all have our limits in seeing things, but through peer feedback, I was able to get different perspectives.” (Sarah)

“In my case, peer feedback was my favorite writing activity. Especially, the peer feedback form was very helpful as a guide for giving feedbacks. However, since we're just students and most of us don't have much grammatical knowledge, providing correct feedback on forms was very difficult. Nevertheless, I think giving feedbacks was more helpful than receiving feedback. I was able to develop a critical eye on writing through peer feedback activity.” (George)



The major drawbacks for peer feedback were lack of expertise compared to teacher feedback, great variations in feedback quality depending on who was giving feedback, lack of confidence in giving feedback to others (especially, grammar), and concern for other student's losing face (i.e., Che-myon).

"I think the peer feedback should be done anonymously. I was very careful in giving feedback not to hurt other student's pride. I could give feedback more freely to close friends but I think it could also damage our friendship. So I would not give serious feedbacks..." (Bob)

It is interesting to note how Confucian culture affected the classroom dynamic. Korean students tended to refrain from giving honest feedback for the fear of other student's losing face, which could, in effect, jeopardize the friendship.

Generally, the students were very anxious about giving feedback on forms. However, most of them seemed to have more confidence in giving feedbacks on contents. Some suggested limiting peer feedback to content area using L1 (Korean) so that English incompetence would not sacrifice the feedback quality much.

"I think it's better to provide feedback only on content for peer feedback... While I was giving feedbacks on forms, I wasn't sure whether I was providing correct feedbacks. Sometimes, my mind went blank. Especially, I am not used to using punctuation such as colon or semi-colon. I think punctuation part should also be omitted from the peer feedback." (Sarah)

"When I gave feedbacks in English, sometimes I could not clearly express my thoughts. So, I think it's better to give feedbacks in Korean." (David)

#### *Group writing*

Originally, group writing was employed in order to brainstorm diverse ideas and to alleviate writing anxiety through working together. However, this was the least favored activity among students: only one out of six interviewed students expressed his like on this method.

"I liked group writing. It may be hard if the group members do not participate well, but our group members were generally contributive except for one person." (Bob)

The disadvantage, on the other hand, was uneasiness in working together, since most students were accustomed to working individually. They knew developing team work through effective communication would pay off in the long run. Nonetheless, since the grade was concerned, they preferred to take responsibility on their own work only. Most students didn't want to sacrifice their grades to develop their cooperation skills. Some students, in particular, expressed their strong complaints about some students who do not contribute at all to the work.

"Students generally dislike working together. They were trained to study individually for 12 years and suddenly working together didn't seem to work out well... I know developing team work can be very useful later when I go out in the society and work in a company... But, it's hard when you see some students who do not participate in group work all." (Sarah)

Moreover, it seemed to be difficult to express their honest opinions for the fear of losing face or to sustain group harmony.

"One member wrote the first draft all by himself. But later, I changed it a little. He said it was Okay, but I think he may have felt offended..." (Julie)

"In order to reach consensus, the refuting process is necessary. However, it was very difficult to say something critical in Korean culture. It can wound a person's pride." (David)

"There were members who were very good at English. My English was not good enough, so my comments were not accepted in most cases. I was really frustrated then. But I felt really good when my opinion was accepted at times." (Sam)

#### **Conclusion**

Current educational shift from teacher-centered to student-centered education seems inevitable. In order to bring about change in passive Korean EFL writing class atmosphere and to effectively facilitate Korean students' learning English writing, the current study adopted learner-centered writing instruction (a combination of modified learner-driven

feedback, portfolio, peer feedback, and group writing) and examined its impact on reducing Korean students' writing anxiety. Since English language learners from Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHCs) tend to be more anxious language learners than other ethnic groups (Woodrow, 2006), it is all the more important to take measures in reducing students' anxiety in Korean EFL classes.

The paired t-test on pre- and post- writing anxiety survey and student interview showed that learner-centered writing instruction could serve as a useful means to decreasing English learners' writing anxiety. The main contributor was found to be the use of portfolio which engaged students in repetitive and step by step writing cycle, which eventually helped students to reduce anxiety and gain more confidence in English writing. Moreover, students' perception on learner-centered writing instruction was overall positive, particularly, modified learner-driven feedback. Most students thought it was wonderful to have options in receiving feedbacks and sincerely appreciated the teacher's efforts to better accommodate the students' needs. Some advantages of peer feedback were also mentioned, such as, acquiring diverse views or ideas, and learning good English expressions from other students. Finally, group writing was found to be the least favored activity.

Interestingly, even though the students generally thought highly of the learner-centered writing instruction, they also exhibited some uneasiness or concern while being involved in the activity. For example, some students confessed how stressful it was for them to be engaged in group activities (i.e., peer feedback and group writing). In addition, the students generally preferred to work individually (e.g. modified LDF and portfolio) than to work together with others. This seemed to be owing to Confucian cultural influence. Specifically, saving one's face or saving other's face (i.e., Che-myon) was prior concern for most students, since students valued relationship more than improvement in English writing. That is, Korean students considered giving inaccurate feedback, especially on grammar, would cause them to lose face. If they pointed out grammatical errors of other students, on the other hand, it would cause them to lose face, since it is pointing out how incorrect their English writing is. Moreover, they refrained from being too critical in order to maintain group harmony. Therefore, the intended synergy effect was not realized in group writing. Finally, high power distance between teacher and students in Korea made it uneasy for most students to actively utilize the chance of receiving individual feedback from the teacher. The present findings also seem to confirm that Confucianism must be taken into account when discussing student-centered English education in China, Korea, and Japan, (Taylor & Taylor, 2014).

### **Pedagogical Implication**

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are made to minimize Confucian influence and maximize the strengths of learner-centered writing instruction in Korean EFL writing classroom. First, employ peer feedback only on global issues (i.e., content and organization) which most Korean students feel open and comfortable about giving or receiving feedbacks. The subjects of the current study showed lack of confidence and anxiety on giving feedback on local issues such as grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation because of their incompetence in English as well as Che-myon. Second, reduce power distance between the teacher and students through promoting video feedback instead of face-to-face feedback. The students who utilized video feedback mentioned that it was just like or even better than having one-on-one conference with the teacher since they could watch the feedback whenever and wherever they wanted to. Third, brainstorm together but write individually in group writing. This is expected to prevent some unparticipating students' free ride. Finally, collect portfolio twice (mid-term & final) instead of once at the end of the term to prevent students from losing writing drafts.

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### **Appendix A** **Peer Feedback Form**

Name:

#### **Global Issues**

1. Content
  - A. What did you like most about the paragraph?
  - B. Are there any irrelevant sentences in the paragraph? (checking for unity)
  
2. Organization
  - A. Does the paragraph have a topic sentence? (Yes/No)  
If so, underline the topic sentence.
  - B. Does the paragraph have supporting sentences? (Yes/No)  
If so, underline the supporting sentences.
  - C. Does the concluding sentence restate the main idea of the paragraph in a new way? (Yes/No)  
If so, underline the concluding sentence.
  - D. Is the paragraph coherent? (Yes/No)  
The paragraph is coherent in terms of (time/ space/ the order of importance/ other).

**Local Issues**

See how the following items can be improved.

1. Vocabulary or expression

Inappropriate vocabulary/expression	I think it's better

2. Grammar

3. Spelling

4. Punctuation

5. Layout

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**About the Author**

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