

Exploring English Writing Strategies of Korean University Students through Activity Theory*

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This study explored the English writing strategies of Korean university students by focusing on the relationship between their study abroad experiences and English writing strategies. The theoretical framework for this study is activity theory. Activity theory explicates social phenomena including human learning, by the interaction of social members through media such as tools and symbols, emphasizing the social context in human activities. Ten Korean university students learning English as a foreign language (L2) participated in this study. Five students had study-abroad experience (Group A), while the other five students (Group B) had not studied abroad. They wrote five English essays and one personal narrative regarding their English writing experience. Their writing strategies were collected by a variety of channels such as questionnaire, interviews, process logs and stimulated recalls. The results indicated that studying abroad affected Korean university students' English writing strategies (e.g., rule mediated strategies, community-mediated strategies, role mediated strategies, and goal mediated strategies). This study drew some ideas from community-mediated strategies and goal mediated strategies, which could be pedagogically applied to English education.

Keywords: Activity Theory, L2 writing, Korean students, study abroad experience, English immersion program

1 Introduction

Until the 80's, English (i.e., L2) learners practiced writing skills in a conventional cognitive framework. Scholars who studied cognitive development argued that development of learning resulted from independent activities conducted by an independent individual. It was believed that all children went through similar cognitive developmental stages. This conventional cognitive paradigm, however, has been criticized since it did not

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fully consider the context of a writing activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Lantolf (2006) stated that conventional writing training only focused on the cognitive development of the writer, and it did not completely understand the social context that the writer belonged to.

According to the sociocultural framework, a writer had to practice writing skills within the social context that the writer interacted with (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Prior (2006) insisted that writing was a mode of social action which helped writers to shape their identity and to learn about the world. He criticized writing for being used as a mere tool for communication. Lee (2018a) also stated that L2 writing could affect the writer's identity.

Sociocultural approach denied the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, and it understood that every activity of humans occurred within social, cultural, and historical environments (Lee, 2018b, 2018c; Lei, 2008). As the relationship between sociocultural framework and SLA (Second language acquisition) gained more attention, scholars approached L2 writing from a sociocultural perspective, utilizing activity theory (Lantolf, 2000, 2001, 2006; Prior, 2006). Activity theory was an idea that explicated social phenomena, including human learning, by the interaction of social members through media, such as tools and symbols, emphasizing the social context in human activities. Applying activity theory to L2 writing was especially important, considering the fact that L2 writers had diverse social, cultural, and historical backgrounds. (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lei, 2008)

Using activity theory, this study aims to investigate the impact of Korean university students' study-abroad experience on their L2 (English) writing strategies.

2 Theoretical Framework of L2 Writing Strategy

The sociocultural approach to writing was originated from Vygotsky's concept of "mediation" (Ageyev, 2003; Ageyev & Miller, 1998). Vygotsky (1978) didn't believe that all children went through the same cognitive development. He believed that all children grew and developed within the context of culture, and he emphasized the importance of sociocultural factors.

Vygotsky (1978) claimed that our biologically predetermined system, which is not different from the instincts of other animals such as hunger and thirst, has evolutionarily transformed into a psychological system that is unique to humans upon encountering artifacts (e.g., cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts). This mediational process, in particular, was made possible in L2 development by learning meaning-based cultural concepts. Lantolf (2006) argued that these concepts could be learned through the process of mediation. He regarded mediation and internalization as the two pillars of L2 acquisition/development.

Engeström (1987, 2001) further developed and expanded Vygotsky's concept of mediation into activity theory by understanding an individual's act within collective activity. He added three types of mediators, which are community, rule, and division of labor; additional mediators were organically associated with other mediators in an activity system. As shown in Figure 1, Engeström's (1999) graph of a collective activity system showed the complexity of social practice.

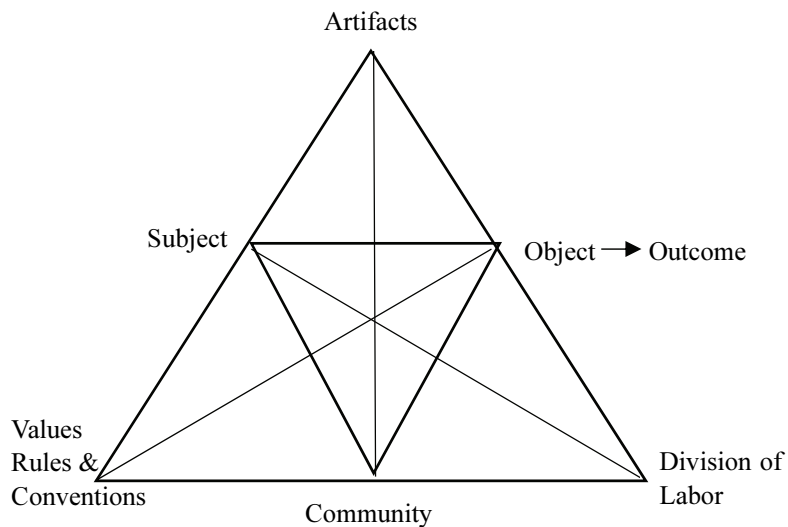


Figure 1. Structure of an activity system (Engeström, 1987, 1999)

The bottom of the picture showed the local activities of human beings and the social and cultural structure on a large scale. In the upper part of the picture, agents and goal-driven activities were mediated by tools and artifacts. The object was the goal of activities; it opened a new prospect for possible actions. Engeström (1999) mentioned the object as “material” or “problem space” that would be changed based upon the outcome (p. 380).

The current approach to activity theory attempted to understand individuals, group/collective action, and goal-driven activities as the core of analysis, modification, and creation. Furthermore, this framework gave priority to human agency. Of course, the interactions among human beings were mediated by technical and linguistic symbols, relevant community, historically accumulated rules, and divided labor (Thorne, 2004).

Many scholars have shown their interest in mediation analysis and applying activity theory to L2 writing, as sociocultural study has become more important in SLA. From this perspective, Prior (1998) defined writing

as a learning activity that was mediated; such an activity included elements such as person, practice, artifacts, system, and community.

When an activity system is applied to L2 writing, mediational tools consist of material and symbolic artifacts. Material artifacts include textbooks, dictionaries, articles, computers, smartphones and so forth. Symbolic artifacts can be divided into two kinds: One written in Korean, and the other written in English. Subjects could also use their experiences as mediational tools. Objects may differ depending on the students. Some students' object could be to improve their ability to write in English, while for other students it could be to get a sufficient grade to pass an English class. The community of an English class would be comprised of students and professor. Regarding L2 writing classes, the main rules would be to write in English and not to plagiarize. Other rules might include speaking in English during the class, doing homework, attending classes and so on. Roles define the division of labor among the constituents of a community. The abovementioned activity system is represented in figure 2.

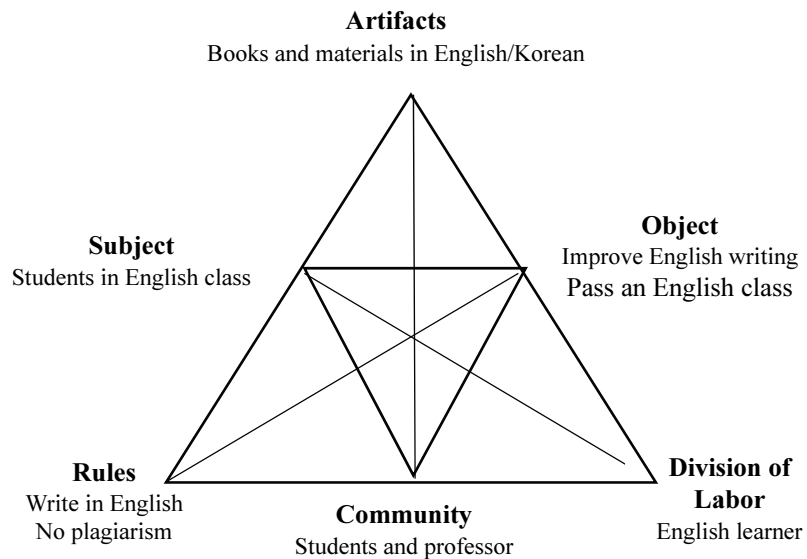


Figure 2. Applying activity system to L2 writing

Scholars who emphasized the social aspect of writing insisted that a writing stage was much more complicated than that of the cognitive model. They thought writing was intertwined with social context. Research on the social context did not separate the factors associated with the written text/writing process from the attitudes/behaviors of the participants. Such

research focused on the relationship between students outside of the classroom and writing instruction inside the classroom (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Oates, Enquist, & Kunsch, 1993).

Research on the participants was relevant to the attitude, background and behavior of the group involved in writing. Here, the group was divided into teachers, students, evaluators, and professors. The researchers were interested in the changes that took place, and they used ethnographic techniques (e.g., case studies, interviews) for their study. Such studies took a qualitative research approach and used various methods for collecting data, such as video clips containing interactions in a monitored classroom and interviews from students and teachers (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Leki, 1999; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008).

Dyson (1989) showed that the writing of children was affected by the type of academic activities they encountered, and they composed patterns of writing as they took part in meaningful activities. Children's thoughts, which were related to the writing, were influenced as they worked together with their peers.

Villamil and Guerrero (1996) studied the process of peer revision to insist that students' L2 writing strategy consisted of five different intervention patterns. Donato (2000) explored how each student's cultural background and personal goals affected his/her usage of different L2 writing strategies, in the same composition assignment. Nelson and Kim (2001) explored how international students used mediational tools as they wrote in L2 (English) and how their L2 writing strategies evolved through contradictions they encountered in their L2 writing process.

Pavlenko and Lantolf (2001) claimed that sociocultural theory added an additional three types of dimensional questions to the traditional method of approach that asked what the individual was doing: "How the person is acting," "Where is the person acting" and "Why is the person acting in this manner" (p. 157). If the abovementioned questions were applied to L2 writing, instead of the question "What the L2 writer is doing," sociocultural theory would pose these three additional questions: "How is the L2 writer acting?," "Where is the L2 writer acting?" and "Why is the L2 writer acting in this manner?"

Atkinson (2003) looked at writing from a sociocultural context, rather than simply looking at it from an individual perspective. He criticized the traditional process-focused L2 research because it solely focused on the cognitive development of L2 writers, which led to the separation between society and writing. Atkinson (2003) claimed that such an approach rendered L2 writing as an independent and asocial activity. Lave and Wenger (1991) also argued that such perspectives did not reckon "The person in the world as member of a sociocultural community" (p. 52).

Lei (2008) investigated the mediational process of two Chinese students as they composed in L2 (English). By analyzing the collected data

from interviews, stimulated recalls, and process logs, the author found four types of mediational tools and concepts employed by the students for their L2 writing. Fong, Kim, and Darus (2009) conducted an inquiry into the transition of activity theory of English composition of four Malay female students, as they moved from secondary to postsecondary school. The authors examined the students' negotiation of culture of L2 writing as they wrote in cultural settings that were different from what they were used to.

Lee (2012) found that U.S. students integrated four different writing strategies for their Korean writing: Artifact-mediated L2 writing strategies, rule-mediated L2 writing strategies, community mediated and role-mediated L2 writing strategies.

To study the interaction between the writer and the reader, Haneda (2007) focused on the target readers of L2 (Japanese) writers and divided their L2 writing developmental stages based on her activity system. Lee (2018b) showed that Korean university students' three stage L2 writing development was generally consistent with Haneda's L2 writing development. He stated that students' L2 proficiency was proportional to the link between their L2 writing and their target readers: Students with higher English proficiency had more influence from the target readers than students with lower English proficiency did.

Since all studies that used activity theory/activity system to study L2 writing used Vygotsky (1978)'s "Mediation" to investigate the "Writing strategy" of L2 learners, this study, too, will use "Mediation" to delve into the "Writing strategy" of L2 learners (e.g., Rule-mediated strategies, community-mediated strategies, role-mediated strategies, goal-mediated strategies) to answer this research question: What impact does Korean university students' study-abroad experience have on their L2 (English) writing strategies?

3 Research Method

3.1 Participants

This study received approvals from the deans of two universities and from the IRB. The participants for this study were 10 Korean college students who were enrolled at S University (n = 5) and K University (n = 5). The participants received an average grade of B+ (or higher) from their previously taken English classes.

Five students had study-abroad experience (Group A), whereas the other five students (Group B) had not studied abroad. By dividing the participants into two groups, the researcher aimed to check the impact of study abroad experience on the participants' L2 writing strategy.

The following table provides information regarding the participants.

Table 1. Background Information of Participants

	Name	Major	Gender	University	Grade	Study abroad experience
Group A	Kim	English literature	Female	SU	Senior	2 years
	Chan	International studies	Female	KU	Senior	1 year
	Yoon	Cultural contents	Female	SU	Senior	1 year
	Lee	Management	Female	KU	Senior	1 year
Group B	Choi	Sociology	Female	SU	Senior	1.5 year
	Hye	International science	Female	KU	Senior	None
	Mang	Political science	Female	SU	Senior	None
	Ji	Cultural contents	Female	KU	Senior	None
	Han	History	Male	SU	Senior	None
	Soo	Philosophy	Male	KU	Senior	None

3.2 Procedures of study¹

Participants wrote English essays once a week, or once in two weeks (Sometimes once in three weeks due to the school exam). All participants answered questionnaire, had an interview, wrote five essays, and wrote one personal narrative after they finished their writing assignments.

3.2.1 Questionnaire

Participants answered the questionnaire when they had lunch together and introduced themselves to one another. Various information was gathered (e.g., participants' previous experience regarding their L1/L2 writing, history of participants' English education, participants' education background, technique participants use for their English writing, participants' philosophy about good L1/L2 writing). (Please see appendix for questionnaire)

3.2.2 Interview

Interviews were carried out at least five times with each participant.

¹ Please refer to the following paper: Lee, M. (2018b). Applying Haneda's activity system based L2 writing development model to L2 writing education in Korean universities. *The Korean Society for Teaching English Literature*, 22(2), 107- 132

Participants had an interview after their writings (sometimes before as well). At first, the researcher interviewed one participant per session, but later, he frequently did group interview with two to three people. While individual interview was suitable for collecting profound information of a certain participant, group interview helped the researcher see the interview questions from diverse perspectives. Since the participants naturally engaged in discussions in group interviews, the researcher scheduled the interview sessions to help participants have fresh discussion with new discussants. Through interviews, in-depth information regarding how the participants used meditational tools as they wrote essays in English, and how their study abroad experience affected their L2 writing was gathered.

3.2.3 L2 writing

Based on the writing genres, the participants were told to write four expository writings, and one narrative writing. The subjects are shown below. Only for the narrative writing, participants were told to choose a topic about which they could write most freely and with more interest. That way, the researcher thought that the participants could employ different L2 writing strategies from the ones they used for argumentative expository writings.

Narrative writing

1. Describe a time when you thought something was an adversity but later it turned out to be good fortune; when was it and how?
2. If you had a time machine, which time period would you like to go back to and why?

Argumentative expository writing:

1. Is artificial intelligence harmful or beneficial to humans?
2. Discuss your thoughts regarding English as an official language in Korea.
3. What should the future path of Korean Wave be?
4. Between individualism and collectivism, which one do you think is more desirable? Why?

3.2.4 Stimulated recall and process log

Upon the content of the participants, students wrote their L2 essay while being videotaped by a mechanical device. After students were finished with their writing, observer and students played the recorded process of their writing on the smartphone and watched it together. Following Gass and Mackey's (2000) advise on stimulated recall, the researcher asked student regarding their pause, thinking, utilization of resources, state of mind, motivation and their particular behavior that took place as a part of their L2 writing strategy.

Process log is a form in which the writers write down their internal process as they engage in writing. Process log has been often utilized by the

researcher who had the purpose of delving into the students' L2 writing strategy.

3.2.5 Personal narratives

Written narratives are known to help obtain in-depth information from both the L2 writers and their L2 writing products (Casanave, 2002). Personal narrative was conducted once at the end of the study. The main goal of the personal narrative was first, to collect more in-depth information than that attained by the interview, second, to cover areas participants missed mentioning during their interview sessions, and third, to give chance to participants to reflect on themselves and their writing.

4 Results

Table 2. Compression Chart

Rule-Mediated Strategies	Group A	Group B
Plagiarism-Mediated Strategies	All were sensitive	40% were sensitive
Time-Mediated Strategies	Average speed: fast	Average speed: slow or normal
Good Writing Criteria-Mediated Strategies	Emphasis on logical argumentation	Emphasis on appropriate words and grammar
Community-Mediated Strategies		
English Speakers-Mediated Strategies	Interaction with foreign friends	No interaction with foreign friends
Classroom Community-Mediated Strategies	All Talked with classmates	All Talked with classmates
Past-Experience -Mediated Strategies	All utilized past experience	All utilized past experience
Target reader-Mediated Strategies	All had imaginary target readers	60% had imaginary target readers
Internet Community - Mediated Strategies	All interacted with foreign friends through Internet	All interacted with domestic friends through Internet
Role-Mediated Strategies		
English-Learner-Role-Mediated Strategies	All identified themselves as English learners	All identified themselves as English learners

Writer-Role-Mediated Strategies	All identified themselves as good English writers	All identified themselves as writers who have a desire to improve English
Bilinguals-Role-Mediated Strategies	All identified themselves as bilinguals	0% identified themselves as bilinguals
Goal-Mediated Strategies	All had high goals (e.g., being a perfect bilingual)	40% had high goals (e.g., being a perfect bilingual)

4.1 Rule-mediated strategies

4.1.1 Plagiarism-mediated strategies

The participants in both groups were told to be cautious of plagiarism before they engaged in each writing assignment. The data showed that group A participants were more careful about plagiarism than group B participants. Kim, Yoon, Chan, and Choi said that they made sure to insert footnotes and citations when they quoted somebody in their writing. Also, Yoon mentioned an anti-plagiarism application and said that using it helped to prevent her from being accused of plagiarism. Lee, in Group A, however, was not as worried about plagiarism as the rest of group A members were, because she mostly referred to Korean resources and translated them into English.

Lee: I did not have to worry about plagiarism because I mainly referred to Korean sources and translated the data/information/opinions I wanted to use into English. (Stimulated recall 2)

Group B participants were not as conscious about plagiarism as group A participants, because first, they preferred Korean resources to English resources, and second, they mainly translated Korean into English as they wrote. Han, for example, did not worry about plagiarism at all, because for all his writings, he translated his Korean sentences into English. He was certain that his English expressions would be too elementary to be accused of plagiarism. However, unlike the other group members, Soo, from group B, was cautious about plagiarism. He said that to avoid plagiarism, he paraphrased sentences by changing vocabulary to easier words and breaking long and complex sentences into short, succinct, and terse sentences. He also mentioned that he sometimes only adopted ideas/content from certain English paragraphs, then thought about the idea/content in Korean, and then translated it back to English to avoid plagiarism. His surprisingly experienced

attitude toward plagiarism, despite his comparatively low English writing proficiency, seemed to be relevant to his goal, which will be explained later.

Soo: I copied and stored articles with professional content and changed them to the level I could write. There were many occasions I wrote by copying from Google Translate, changing words to easier ones, and then dividing sentences in short pieces. As there was a restriction against plagiarism, when I looked at English articles, I only thought about getting ideas. I thought about the thoughts and contents in Korean and then translated it to English. I think I had to think more during the writing process, think in English, and then write and translate due to the plagiarism issue. (Stimulated recall 1)

One noticeable participant was Mang. Though Mang was an excellent writer in Korean and was thus well conscious of plagiarism, she did not worry about it in her first English writing. It was because she mainly referred to Korean sources and translated Korean into English in her earlier writing. However, as Mang started utilizing English sources and tried to use English as her main mediational tool instead of Korean from her second writing, she became wary of plagiarism. She even included footnotes in her third and fourth writings. She looked up English websites to collect information, and she tried to write in English directly, instead of using Korean as a medium.

In sum, participants put effort into their L2 writing to avoid plagiarism. For example, Yoon used anti-plagiarism applications online to prevent herself from being accused of plagiarism. Soo looked up information written in L2, translated it to L1, and then translated it back to L2 to prevent potential plagiarism. Also, their level of sensitivity to plagiarism differed depending on their English proficiency. Group A participants, who employed L2-language-mediated strategy, were more sensitive to plagiarism than group B participants, who employed L1-Language-mediated strategy.

4.1.2 Time-mediated strategies

Though nobody asked for extra time and everybody finished their writing on time, group A participants were generally faster in their writing than the group B participants.

Group A

Kim, who possessed nearly impeccable English writing skills, was motivated to finish her writing as fast as possible. Considering her statement that she felt pressure to meet the researcher's high expectations for her writing, her pride as a good, trained English specialist and the researcher's expectations seemed to motivate her to complete her essay in the fastest way possible:

“My goal is finishing my writing within a short time. I want to write a good essay in the fastest way possible.” (Process log 2)

Unlike other participants, Choi allotted lots of time in collecting data for her writing. In her second writing, she spent more than half of the time for collecting information/sources. On the basis of her previous experience as an exchange student in Canada, she had confidence in her L2 writing and knew that it would not take her too long to finish her essay on schedule. Lee and Chan had no problem in meeting the deadline, although Chan—who had taken most of her college courses in English—was a bit faster than Lee. Yoon also said that although she ran out of time once during a writing assignment, she was gratified with the length, content, and quality of her writing.

Group B

Ji and Han did not have specific problems regarding the time limit. It was surprising that Han, who used the method of translating Korean sentences into English, did not have any time problems. Han stated that his superior Korean writing skills helped him to finish his English writing on the hour. While setting a time limit became a burden to some students, doing so motivated others. Hye said that she always felt time pressure because she knew that she was a slow writer. Soo said the deadline worked as a motivating force to him to finish his writing punctually. Soo said that since writing in English took more time than writing in Korean because he had to translate Korean into English, having a set time limit helped him to focus more on his work:

Soo: The time limit gave me some motivation. I always wanted to finish writing within the set time limit (Personal narrative)

Also, having a fixed time limit helped one student to differentiate her writing strategy from that of others. Before coming to the office (experiment site) to write, Mang brainstormed her L2 writing at the coffee shop near the office for about an hour. She was a bit nervous that she might not be able to finish her English writing on schedule, which prompted her to be well prepared for the assignment. As a result, she became one of the fastest writers:

Mang: I always go to the coffee shop to pre-work for my writing before I come to this place, because I am afraid of not finishing my writing on time (Stimulated recall 4)

Participants sometimes did not have enough time to complete their essays. On these occasions, participants from both groups chose to submit their writing, even though they were not satisfied with it. For example, Yoon,

from Group A, said that she once had to sacrifice the quality of her writing by not double checking the legitimacy of her logic and not proofreading her writing, to finish her writing on time.

Hye, from Group B, also mentioned that her logical flow might have been damaged sometimes because she did not have time to add certain paragraphs to her writing. In sum, it was found that the mediator “time” affected the writing strategies of the participants in different ways.

4.2 Community-mediated strategies

Participants actively communicated with their English-speaking friends (present and past) and classroom friends in South Korea. Participants asked peers who were better L2 writers than them for their comments, suggestions, and feedback. While participants in group B used the classroom-community-mediated strategy to interact with Korean friends, participants in group A showed a propensity to interact with English-speaking friends. Also, participants’ writing strategies were influenced by their diverse target readers in various ways. As a result, five types of community-mediated strategies were identified: English speaker, classroom, internet, past experience, and target reader community-mediated strategies.

4.2.1 English speakers-mediated strategies

Participants who had been abroad had a proclivity to interact with their foreign friends about the topic of writing. For example, Yoon had a chance to discuss the topic with her foreign friends since she was volunteering as a translator between foreign students and Korean students at her university.

Yoon: Having conversation with foreign classmates broadened my view on the topic. The online articles convinced me eventually, but my foreign classmates made me think again about the authors’ arguments. (Process log 3)

In sum, participants who interacted with their foreign friends could see the topic from different angles. Participants with study-abroad experience communicated with their foreign friends regarding the writing topics to broaden their perspectives or to get feedback on their idea.

4.2.2 Classroom community-mediated strategies

Some students like Soo, Han, Kim, Lee, and Hye talked with their classmates about the topic. Soo talked with his classmates about his topic: Artificial intelligence. He said that it broadened his perspective and helped him reach a conclusion for his writing. Before Han submitted his first writing, he asked one of his classmates, whose English writing skills were superior to his, to read his essay and provide comments, suggestions, and feedback. Han also

talked about the topic with his friend Kim, and “Could broaden his perspective by noticing the differences in their opinions” (Han, Stimulated Recall 4). Hye and Lee also talked with each other about the topic every time on their way to the office (i.e., experiment site). According to them, it helped them to become more acquainted with the topic and to organize their ideas.

Whom they asked for help is a subject worth investigating. Whereas group B participants asked mainly Korean friends for help, group A participants asked classmates, who came from English-speaking countries to Korea, for help. While students who did not have study abroad experience had difficulty becoming friends with foreign students from English-speaking countries, students who had study abroad experience showed a tendency to become friends more easily with foreign students who came from English-speaking countries.

4.2.3 Past experience-mediated strategies

In Chan’s second writing task, “pros and cons of English as an official language in Korea,” she recalled her experience in Canada. During her stay in Canada, she met many friends from Northern Europe who possessed high-level English skills. Back then, she came to believe that, without English being an official language of a country, one can still have a high-level English proficiency. The second writing topic reminded her of her time in Canada:

Chan: I remember talking to students from North Europe when I was an exchange student. They were good at English even though English was not an official language. They told me even if Korea doesn’t make English an official language, I will eventually learn it. (Stimulated Recall 2)

Ji also remembered the conversation she had with her foreign friend. Because her friend was majoring in neuroscience, they could have a bit of an in-depth conversation about artificial intelligence. Ji could recall what they conversed about and what conclusion they reached:

Ji: We said we feel a little bit uncomfortable about the fact that artificial intelligence replaces many parts of human life. (Stimulated Recall 1)

In sum, participants’ past experience worked as a mediator as well as their present experience. It helped participants to recall their memories regarding the topic, see the topic from different angles, and to organize their ideas.

4.2.4 Target reader-mediated strategies

The majority of the participants (i.e., all group A participants and three of

group B participants) had imaginary target readers as/before they embarked on writing. Having target readers affected their writing strategies in numerous ways. For example, target readers for Soo's first writing were students around his age. Soo wanted to write a paper that was easy enough for his target readers to read, yet featuring sophisticated expressions and clear logic. Soo also tried to broaden the target readers' perspectives by introducing diverse and concrete examples, to persuade them eventually.

Soo: Potential readers would be the students of my age group. I would like to let them know about the social influence of artificial intelligence, discuss it together, and expand our minds. Instead of listening to their vague opinions on artificial intelligence, I would like to give them an opportunity to think about the subject by providing deeper evidence and examples, organizing the logic, and convincing them of my position. (Stimulated Recall 3)

Soo: By considering the potential readers, I repeatedly proofread my writing so that friends in my age group could easily read and understand it. Also, I made sure that it did not look like a low-level writing (Stimulated Recall 4).

In Soo's third writing (i.e., Describe the Korean wave and make a suggestion for the future of the Korean wave), his target readers were foreigners who wanted to know about the Korean wave. Therefore, Soo constantly looked in the dictionary to locate the most adequate expressions/words, paraphrased sentences, and checked his grammar in an attempt to make his essay look like the one written by a native English speaker.

When Mang was writing her second topic, "The pros and cons of English as an official language in Korea," her target readers were foreigners who used English as their mother tongue. This concept of her target readers motivated her to write clean, correct, and sophisticated sentences. Her target readers also drove her to write an essay that could be recognized as a "good writing," despite some grammatical flaws.

Mang: I thought that this writing was to be read by foreigners in English speaking countries. As a Korean, I would like to let them see a bit of good thoughts in the essay, although the English may be poor. That is because we are not a third-world nation. (Stimulated Recall 2)

In Mang's third topic, "Describe the Korean wave, and make a suggestion for the future of the Korean wave," her target readers were

foreigners who were not well acquainted with the Korean wave. She considered that a good explanation would be a priority for foreigners who wanted to understand the Korean wave. Thus, rather than being emotional or persuasive, she chose to be more rational and logical in her writing.

Mang: I thought that the target readers would be the people who would encounter the Korean wave for the first time in their lives. Therefore, I thought I needed to write more reasonably and logically. I also tried to maintain my objectivity throughout the writing. (Simulated Recall 3)

Ji also mentioned that in her third writing, “Describe the Korean wave, and make a suggestion for the future of the Korean wave,” she tried to be neutral throughout her writing after she established her target readers as foreigners who did not have much knowledge regarding the Korean wave. Ji said she tried to be objective in her writing because she was worried that she might end up “simply describing the beauty of the Korean wave in a one-sided way.” (Simulated Recall 3)

In sum, all group A participants and three of group B participants had target readers who affected the content, foci, logic, and the tone of their L2 writing.

4.3 Role-mediated strategies

Based on the data, it was found that three types of roles played the role of mediator that affected the writing strategies of participants: English-learner-role-mediated strategies, writer-role-mediated strategies, and bilingual-role-mediated strategies. Throughout the study, it was found that participants identified themselves with their roles as they engaged in L2 writing.

4.3.1 English learner role-mediated strategies

All participants identified themselves as English learners. In other words, every participant had the role of an English learner. They showed how their roles as English learners mediated their writing strategies. All participants stated writing papers in English enhanced their English writing ability. For example, Ji said writing a long English essay on a weekly basis helped her to maintain her English skills. She said that as she engaged in L2 writing, she rediscovered her writing process, of which she was not aware before: Brainstorming in Korean, trying to think in English if possible, what kind of expression she prefers, and so forth. Han said that although writing in English at first was a stressful thing, with the passage of time, the stress had diminished. He felt that the more he wrote, the better he became in English writing. Mang said that this experiment was an exhilarating experience because she had always had an interest in English. She told me that the five

writing experiences not only improved her writing ability in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and expression, but also her writing strategy. Mang said she used Korean as a main mediator in her first writing. She employed the writing strategy of translating Korean to English, and she collected sources in Korean. However, she figured out that she tended to write complex sentences in Korean, which made it difficult for her to translate them into English. As a result, she stopped that habit.

Mang: I think I prefer unnecessarily complicated sentences when I write in Korean. It just made my English composition more burdensome, so I stopped doing that. Since I am not a proficient English writer, I prefer composing easy sentences in English. (Process log 2)

In sum, all participants identified themselves as English learners and reckoned this study as an opportunity to enhance their English writing, which made them to exert themselves in each writing session

4.3.2 L2 writer role-mediated strategies

Group A

When asked about how they viewed themselves as writers, what Group A participants mentioned in common was that they were “good English writers.” They had pride and thus felt the responsibility of submitting high-level English papers. Kim viewed herself as a good writer and said that she did not want to disappoint both herself and her readers. Lee, because of her identity as a good writer, endeavored to use as many English expressions used by native speakers of English as possible in her writing. Choi perceived herself as a student writer, majoring in philosophy, who plans to pursue her graduate degree in the United States of America. As a result, she emphasized logic more in her writing, in comparison to other participants. Yoon viewed herself as a writer who could clearly convey her idea in English. She said that having such an identity as a writer motivated her to consider her logical flow, diversity in her English expressions, grammatical correctness, and the usage of high-level vocabulary in her writing. Chan’s identity as a writer was a student who was studying in the department of international studies, where English was used in all classes instead of Korean. Though being under stress due to her major sometimes, she had her writer identity affect her writing in its favor. Chan’s rule in writing was having no grammatical and spelling errors since she did not want to be embarrassed about her English writing. Also, she advertently tried to use difficult vocabulary and complex sentences in her writing. Chan said she did so because she was conscious of her readers who might have high expectations of her English writing due to her major.

Group B

Unlike group A, who identified themselves as good writers, when group B participants were asked about how they identified themselves as writers, the answer was different. They identified themselves as writers who liked English and had a desire to improve their English.

Mang's identity as a writer was one who liked the way English sounds, who wanted to use English as a citizen of the world, who wanted to delve into English, and who wanted to have high proficiency in English. Her writer identity helped her to set a standard for her writing: easy, logical, and creative. Ji considered herself as a writer who wanted to have both writing skills and good content in her writing. She thought that merely focusing on improving one's English skills is not enough to enhance one's writing, as good writing consists of both good content and good language. She said her philosophy attributed to the consistent logical flow throughout all her writings.

Hye said that she viewed herself as a writer who was capable of communicating with and persuading readers through her writing. As a result, Hye focused on logic and grammar in her writing. Soo's authorship identity was a writer who desired to possess English skills equivalent to those of university students in English-speaking countries. Therefore, in Soo's writing, he changed easy vocabulary to difficult/academic vocabulary, and he used English expressions that native speakers of English commonly use. Soo thought that doing this would better the quality of his essay.

Han had the writer identity of "being responsible for my writing," (Interview 2) since the essay was written under his name. Han tried his best to use correct grammar, advanced expressions, and adequate words, and to exhibit solid logical flow throughout his writing. One intriguing phenomenon was that Han was experiencing internal conflict between his writer identities. Though he tried to reach his potential as a writer each time he engaged in writing, at the same time, he also felt the temptation to simply get the writing done in a half-hearted fashion.

Han: In every writing session, there was conflict between exerting myself and just getting it done. I always wanted to improve my English writing, but my translation fell far short of my expectation. (Interview 2)

In sum, while group A participants' self-imposed role as a writer was good English writers, that of group B participants was writers who wanted to improve their English skills. As a consequence, the difference in their roles led to the differences in their writing strategies.

4.3.3 Bilingual role-mediated strategies

Group A participants assumed the role of bilingual, though not perfect yet. They considered themselves as English bilinguals who are to become more

advanced bilinguals who can speak nearly perfect English in the future. Due to their certain identities, they tried to avoid translation-based writing method which utilized Korean as a medium during their L2 writing process. Instead, they used English websites when they searched for materials, tried to read English books, wrote the outline in English, and directly wrote in English.

For example, Chan tried to think in English as she wrote. Chan had the idea that since her major was international studies and she planned to work abroad, she should have native-like English proficiency. Thus, even in her everyday life, she tried to “think” in English, and this was reflected in her writing. She told me that she thought 70% of her logical process in English as she wrote. Her assumed role also motivated her to write an impeccable paper, having no flaws in terms of grammar, expression, and logic of the writing.

Chan: I always have a goal of writing an English paper which has as good quality as that written by native English speakers. (Stimulated recall 2)

One interesting finding was that Choi used her mixed-languages thinking method to her advantage. She stated that thinking in two languages helped her to concentrate as she wrote, by changing her mode of thinking to another language when she lost her focus on writing.

4.4 Goal-mediated strategies

The goal for this writing assignment for the participants was writing an English essay within a limited time. Instead of this obvious answer, I asked the participants what their underlying, deeper, long-term goals for participating in this study would be. Here, I explained the differences in goals between groups A and B, and how the participants’ goals mediated their writing strategies.

Group A

As a skilled English writer, Kim said her goal was writing a paper of a quality she could be gratified with. She held a high-level standard for English writing, and admitted that from her perspective, she is only halfway through in terms of English proficiency. As a result, she attributed high quality of her writing to her goal.

Choi studied English because her goal was doing her graduate studies in the U.S. and writing her dissertation in English. Also, her long-term goal was living abroad in the future, which was also a big motivation for her to study English. Her goals caused her to focus more on the “logic” in her writing, compared to the other participants. In other words, her essay, which was the most logical writing amongst all essays, was coupled with her goals.

Yoon was also considering doing her graduate studies in English-

speaking countries and thus had a goal of shaping her English to the level of native speakers' English. Consequently, in her writing assignments, Yoon had a strong desire to write well-organized English papers using high-level vocabulary and sophisticated expressions.

Lee wanted high-level English proficiency because first, her short-term goal was studying abroad in an English-speaking country and getting a job in an international business firm, which requires proficient English communication and writing skills. Second, her long-term goal was writing novels, play scripts, or movie scenarios flawlessly in English. Lee told me that her goals mediated her writing as follows: Her main focus was composing a logical, reader-friendly writing comprising terse and succinct sentences.

Chan wanted to possess perfect English proficiency partly due to her major. Her major was department of international studies, where all lectures were done in English. She said people usually have high expectations for her English, but she is not yet capable of meeting their expectations. Chan was stressful about this and therefore had a strong desire to better her English to attain native speakers' English level. This led Chan to be reader conscious, which became a motivational force that made her exert herself as she engaged in the writing assignments.

Group B

Hye's goal was upgrading her English to the level where she could write on internet websites or blogs so that she could share her opinions with people. Hye stated that she wanted to improve her English writing not for academic purposes but for communicative purposes. Her goal is in line with her saying that most of her writings were aimed at general readers like herself.

Ji said she wanted to enhance her English writing skills to get high scores on English tests (e.g., TOEFL). She mentioned that because of this, when she wrote, she subconsciously rendered the target readers as examiners who grade her essays. Ji said that this made her focus more on the grammatical aspect sometimes.

Han's goal was to have better his English skills because he thought English would be a very effective tool for him in this internationalized world. Although writing in English was difficult for Han, his goal and motivation made him always exert effort and try to reach his potential whenever he engaged in writing.

Mang was to be in charge of the protocol of an international conference in three to four months. Therefore, she wanted to be more dexterous in English so that she could be impeccable in sending messages or emails in English. Also, Mang's goal was not studying or learning English, but rather naturally "acquiring" English as native speakers of English do. Her goal explained the reason why the ratio of her English usage in her writing process increased, from her second to the last writing (e.g., brainstorm,

organize structure, gather sources, and so forth).

Soo's goal was to write English at the level of a university student whose first language was English, because he was planning to study and live abroad in the future. His goal motivated him to try to write skillful enough essays that could be acknowledged as a writing which was authored by a native speaker of English.

In sum, the majority of the participants in group B, who had relatively low English skills compared to group A, set their goal to: Satisfy the English writing standards their schools had set, get good grades, and get employed at the companies they wanted to join. On the other hand, the participants in group A, who possessed higher level English skills and had the experience of studying abroad, and Soo and Mang from group B, had specific and high goals for their English, such as possessing native English speaker-like English skills. As a consequence, it turned out that the goal, as a mediator, was linked with the students' L2 writing strategies. Group A participants had higher goals than group B participants, which led group A participants to use English as a mediator in their writing process, and to exert themselves to submit a high-quality essay.

5 Findings and Discussion

5.1 Rule-mediated strategies

Plagiarism is a very delicate and complex matter. In particular, the concept of plagiarism is weak in collectivist cultures because of the tradition that good writing naturally used the wordings of the literary sages' classic teachings after the writer had read and memorized them. In the east, writers tended to memorize the wordings of literary sages and use them in their writing, since the demarcation among people's writings was blurry in a collectivist culture (Cho, 2010). This phenomenon might have caused some plagiarism-related problems for Korean L2 (English) learners as they wrote in L2.

The participants were mostly aware of the problem of plagiarism and tried not to break the rules while they were writing. Also, due to the enforcement of intellectual property rights, participants knew that plagiarism was not allowed worldwide. They thought that making somebody else's thoughts look as their own would be ethically wrong. Moreover, they were positive that complying with the plagiarism prevention rules would help them improve their L2 writing.

Group A participants were more sensitive to plagiarism than group B participants. This phenomenon could be explicated from two perspectives: First, group A participants mostly used English resources (e.g., English websites, blogs, articles, dissertations, English thesauruses and so forth) as they engaged in L2 writing, while group B participant mostly referred to

Korean resources. Second, during group A students' study abroad time, they learned the concept of plagiarism in detail, and thus responded to plagiarism more sensitively than those who did not learn/learned less about it.

5.2 Community-mediated strategies

One noticeable thing I found was that the concept of the "target reader" could significantly affect students' L2 writing strategies. As the participants embarked on their writing, they actively interacted with this imaginary group constantly throughout their writing. This had a strong impact on participants' writing strategies, since keeping the target readers in their mind affected the content, foci, logic, and the tone of their writing. This lies in the same vein with Haneda (2007)'s finding that students' L2 writing was affected by their target readers in diverse ways. Also, this phenomenon exhibits the concept of Bakhtin (1986)'s interrelationship.

5.3 Role-mediated strategies

It was shown that all participants identified themselves as diligent English learners. Whenever they participated in experiments or listened to English lectures at school, they assumed the position of diligent English learners. Their attitude did not change throughout this experiment as well. However, as English writers, the participants' definition of their roles varied depending on their competency in English. Participants in group B, who had lower English proficiency compared with group A, defined their role as diligent English learners. On the other hand, participants in group A, who had higher proficiency in English, defined their role as good English writers/bilinguals; this attributed to their usage of English as a main mediator in their L2 writing and to their effort to submit a high-quality essay.

Han often felt the temptation to simply get the writing done in a half-hearted fashion, rather than exerting himself to submit a high-quality essay. This was partly due to Han's inferior English proficiency compared with that of the other participants: He had more difficulty in English composing than other participants, as he had to translate Korean to English sentence by sentence, which had always been a hard task for him. This gave Han some sort of leniency toward his writing, as he justified his half-hearted writing by thinking, "I am not that good in English anyway." (Stimulated recall 2)

One interesting finding in this section was Choi's L2 writing strategy of mixed-languages thinking method. She normally thought in English, but she sometimes switched her mode of thinking to Korean when she could not concentrate; this helped her keep her focus on writing. This supports the claim that bilinguals have several cognitive advantages compared to monolinguals, including increased attentional control (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010).

5.4 Goal-mediated strategies

The participants had different goals, and even when they shared the same goal, they had different motivations. Group A participants and Soo and Mang from group B wanted to master English writing because they believed English was essential for them to live the lives they wanted. Meanwhile, the rest of group B participants wanted to better their English writing for less important purposes in comparison (e.g., to get a good score on a test).

It is believed that Mang's development as an English writer in terms of the increasing amount of English usage as a mediational artifact in her L2 writing was related to the intensity of her goal in English, which was "acquiring English." Plus, despite Soo's English proficiency, which was inferior to that of Group A students, Soo tried to think in English, use English sources, and tried not to plagiarize by showing his well-awareness of plagiarism. This fact seemed to be relevant to his goal of mastering English as well. This phenomenon is in line with Lee (2018b)'s findings that students' L2 writing/L2 writing strategies were affected by their goal/motivation.

Whether a goal for higher English skills leads to higher English proficiency, or higher English proficiency leads to a goal for higher English skills seems to be a one-sided opinion that implies the danger of being categorized under egg-first or chicken-first questions. Rather, it would be a bit more plausible to say that the goal for higher English skills and higher English proficiency interact with each other.

6 Conclusion

The theoretical framework of this study is Engeström's (1987, 1999) activity system model which was originated from Vygotsky (1978). The findings of this study are in line with the idea that learning writing is a mediated activity, which is resulted from the interaction between the writer and society/environment (Lee, 2018c; Swain, 2008). It also supports Engeström (1999)'s claim that "Mediation breaks down the Cartesian walls that isolate the individual mind from the culture and the society" (p. 29).

Most of the participants actively interacted with target readers as they wrote in L2. Keeping the target readers in their mind affected the content, foci, logic, and the tone of their L2 writing. The participants in group B defined their role as diligent English learners, while the participants in group A defined their role as good English writers/bilinguals. Group A participants had higher goals than group B participants, which motivated group A participants to use English as a mediator in their writing process, and to exert themselves to submit a high-quality essay.

In this study, the researcher drew some idea which could be pedagogically applied to classrooms. One pedagogical implication is the

importance of goal/motivation. As a consequence, it turned out that the goal affected the students' L2 writing strategies. Participants who had higher goals than others used English as a mediator in their writing process, referred to English resources, was more sensitive to plagiarism and exerted themselves to submit a high-quality essay. Therefore, L2 educators should foster L2 learners to have specific goals and to maintain that goal throughout their learning process. This is especially important in countries like Korea, where L2 proficiency (e.g., English) is highly acknowledged but not used in everyday life.

Another pedagogical implication is that improvement of L2 writing is relevant to strategy modification of community-mediated strategy. This paper revealed that having specific target readers affected not only participants' writing style, but also their mindset toward writing. Some participants exerted themselves to meet the standards of their target readers, which is the kind of activity that could help L2 learners reach their full potential.

There is a recommendation for future research regarding this study. Nowadays, digital videos are being utilized as literary tools by students in classroom settings. Students write poems and essays using digital video in various ways that reflect the multi-faceted gamut of using digital video as a literary tool (Bruce, 2010; Bruce, 2015; Bruce & Chiu, 2015; Bruce, Di Cesare, Kaczorowski, Hashey, Boyd, Mixon, & Sullivan, 2013). Examining the impact of students' sociocultural context on their digital video-based writing would be another intriguing study with much pedagogical implication.

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Appendix

Questionnaire (Modified & changed from Nelson & Kim, 2001).

1. How long have you been studying English?
2. When did you first begin to study English via public education?
3. Have you ever lived in foreign countries?
4. How good do you think your English is in your department?
5. What was the score of the last English test(s) (e.g., TWE, TOEIC, OPIC, TOEFL...) you took?
6. On a 1 to 3 scale (High, medium, and low), please grade your English skills in 4 areas (speaking, reading, listening, and writing). What area of English you think you are most good at? Why? What area of English you think you are most poor at? Why?
7. Among the four areas of English (i.e., speaking, reading, listening, and writing), what aspect of English you like the most? Why?
8. Among the four areas of English (i.e., speaking, reading, listening, and writing), what aspect of English you like the least? Why?
9. What do you like the most about English?
10. What do you like the least about English?
11. What do you like the most about Korean?
12. What do you like the least about Korean?
13. What do you think the main difference between Korean and English is?
14. How much relation do you think there are among speaking, reading, listening, and writing in learning English?
15. What was your most difficult memory in learning English?
16. How did learning English change you as a person? How did it change your life?

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