

Preservice Teachers' L2 Writing Anxiety and Their Perceived Benefits of Freewriting: A Case Study

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Park, Jeongyeon. (2022). Preservice teachers' L2 writing anxiety and their perceived benefits of freewriting: A case study. *English Teaching*, 77(s1), 63-77.

The purpose of this study was to examine L2 learners' perceived writing anxiety and the usefulness of freewriting in improving L2 writing fluency. Seventeen L1-Korean preservice English teachers enrolled in a teacher education program at a university participated. An L2 writing anxiety survey, 170 freewritings, and 17 reflective writings were analyzed. The participants showed a moderate level of L2 writing anxiety, mostly due to a lack of confidence. Across 10 freewriting practice sessions, participants' words per minute gradually increased, with high and low fluency groups showing a similar upward trend. Participants' written reflections revealed that they perceived the freewriting practice useful in boosting confidence and improving skills. Expressing ideas freely without concern for accuracy alleviated their L2 writing anxiety most. Participants reported they had difficulty writing in English continuously for several minutes, and disliked absence of teacher feedback.

Key words: L2 writing anxiety, freewriting, preservice teachers, teacher education

This work was supported by the Dong-A University research fund.

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Received 12 June 2022; Reviewed 16 July 2022; Accepted 12 August 2022



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1. INTRODUCTION

Most second language (L2) teachers would probably agree that writing is one of the most difficult skills for students to learn. It is commonly reported by learners that they feel stuck or even frightened when they are given a writing task. Research has shown that L2 or English as a foreign language (EFL) learners often feel a certain level of writing anxiety, and that it can negatively affect their writing performance (e.g., Park, 2020; Woodrow, 2011). This situation is in part due to a lack of writing experience, as the predetermined curriculum in many EFL settings focuses on other language skills, especially grammar and vocabulary (Liao & Wong, 2010). Writing is often limited to the sentence level or, at best, to the paragraph level. In addition, L2 instructors are mainly preoccupied with accuracy development; therefore, writing fluency tends to be largely ignored or left to improve as a result of developing proficiency (Nation, 2007). Yet achieving good L2 writing skills is also essential as communicating ideas and conveying information largely relies on writing in many contexts (Hyland, 2007).

Although L2 scholars and educators recognize the importance of promoting writing fluency, it is still under-researched, and attempts to advance the pedagogy of L2 writing remain scarce. As one of the principles of teaching writing, Nation (2009) emphasized repetitive activities for fluency development to enable learners to write at a reasonable speed. He also noted that such activities should be done with easy and familiar material. While echoing Nation's argument that both accuracy and fluency development should be the focus of a well-balanced writing course, Nguyen (2015) reported the benefits of a 7-minute freewriting technique. Such freewriting, which is based on the idea that being caught up with producing accurate forms of language prevents learners from putting their thoughts freely onto paper (Park, 2020), has been implemented, and has been shown to increase writing confidence, decrease writing anxiety, and develop writing fluency (e.g., Hwang, 2010; Nguyen, 2015; Park, 2020; Penn & Lim, 2016; Rivers, 2007). However, more research is needed to determine whether freewriting is worth allocating regular class time to at the tertiary level, especially in EFL settings. In addition, to my knowledge, only a few studies have been conducted in the Korean setting. The present study thus explores EFL Korean students' writing anxiety and possible effects of freewriting on their anxiety and writing fluency. Implemented in a teacher education program, the study particularly aimed to raise the preservice English teacher-participants' awareness of the importance of L2 writing fluency.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. L2 Writing Anxiety

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), language-learning anxiety is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128). Numerous studies on L2 anxiety have reported its impact on L2 performance (e.g., Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1986). Horwitz et al. (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), but later researchers argued that anxiety is skill-specific, and called for the development of instruments targeting specific skills (e.g., Aida, 1994; Cheng, 2004; Phillips, 1992). Early research focused on L2 speaking anxiety in particular (e.g., Phillips, 1992; Woodrow, 2006), but research soon began to be conducted on the relationship between anxiety and other language skills: reading (e.g., Sellers, 2000); writing (e.g., Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Cheng, 2002; Woodrow, 2011); and listening (e.g., Elkhafaifi, 2005; Kim, 2000).

Defining L2 writing anxiety as “a relatively stable anxiety disposition associated with L2 writing, which involves a variety of dysfunctional thoughts, increased physiological arousal, and maladaptive behaviors” (p. 319), Cheng (2004) attempted to devise a self-report measure of second language writing anxiety to complement previous instruments and help capture the multidimensional aspects of anxiety. More recently, Choi (2013) investigated whether foreign language anxiety is associated with L2 writing anxiety and how it affects learners’ writing performance, using the FLCAS and the English Writing Anxiety Scale developed by Lee (2005). A significantly positive correlation between the two scales was uncovered, but there was no significant relationship between writing anxiety and writing performance. Conversely, Woodrow (2011) found that anxious students did not perform well in their English writing, and that their anxiety was related to parental pressure, lack of effort, and extrinsic motivation. Similarly, Park (2020) reported that students’ writing performance was negatively correlated with their writing anxiety, suggesting a debilitating impact of writing anxiety. Findings have been somewhat conflicting, yet L2 writing anxiety does exist and is a factor to be dealt with in the classroom.

2.2. Freewriting

Freewriting, or quick writing, is often used in the classroom as a pre-writing activity. During freewriting, learners are encouraged to write as much as they can while not worrying about style, structure, or accurate use of grammar or spelling (Elbow, 1989; Penn & Lim, 2016; Rivers, 2007). The single most important principle of freewriting is to write without

stopping (Elbow, 1979). Many EFL learners find L2 writing difficult; their limited writing experience brings about a lack of confidence and anxiety. In this respect, freewriting can be useful as it helps L2 writers put their ideas onto paper by primarily focusing on the content. Due to these characteristics, freewriting is often deemed journal writing, which is also reflective and has freedom of expression. In addition, the readers are mostly the learners themselves. Journal writing is also reported to contribute to the development of general writing ability and to promote learner autonomy (Harmer, 2004).

Several researchers have argued that freewriting has benefits for L2 fluency and writing confidence (Casanave, 2004; Harmer, 2004; Nation, 2009), and a few empirical studies have been conducted. For example, in Hwang's (2010) study, college-level L2 students participated in freewriting in which they were guided to write for 15 minutes on a given topic during an eight-week period. The study found that all seven students increased their speed by 3.87 words per minute (wpm), suggesting the benefits of freewriting on writing fluency in EAP contexts. In addition, student responses to a survey indicated a positive impact of freewriting on students' confidence. Li (2007) also implemented a freewriting activity in an academic writing class. Unlike typical freewriting practices, in Li's study the students participated in freewriting intensively over a two-week period. In particular, the author explored the use of focused freewriting as a tool for developing students' academic writing skills while helping them understand the nature and the process of academic writing. In contrast to Hwang's (2010) approach, in Li's activity, the freewriting topics were associated with topics covered in class. Thus, through freewriting, students explored the topics discussed in class, while demonstrating their understanding. In addition, students exchanged their writing with their classmates and wrote responses to each other. However, the basic rules of freewriting—no editing and no concern for accuracy—were maintained.

Penn and Lim (2016) explored whether freewriting exercises could facilitate low-level EFL learners' overall English proficiency, involving speaking, listening, and reading skills. The experimental group students, who freewrote for 10–15 minutes each class, made significantly greater improvement than those in the control groups, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition, the authors asserted that the freewriting exercise helped students think in the target language, while providing “a safe outlet” for them to practice English (p. 326). This claim is in line with Rivers's (2007) assertion that “a low risk, non-threatening environment for personal expression” is the primary aim of freewriting, and that it “allow[s] the flow of language and syntax to become a lively and surprising force” (p. 10). More recently, Park (2020) implemented freewriting in an academic writing classroom, and the study found that all three proficiency groups demonstrated a gradual increase in wpm across the semester, with the middle proficiency group showing the most improvement. In addition, the participants commented that the freewriting practice helped alleviate their fear of English writing and strengthened their motivation and interest in writing. While these empirical

studies have shown the benefits of freewriting for L2 fluency, there is still too little research to make any conclusive claims for its pedagogical benefits.

As shown, despite the crucial role of writing, improving L2 writing has been somewhat neglected in the English classroom in favor of other skills. Furthermore, little attention has been given to the effects of freewriting on college-level students' writing fluency although its benefit has been clearly reported in previous studies. Therefore, the present study implemented a freewriting practice in an academic writing classroom at a tertiary level, hoping to raise the students' awareness of writing fluency, while alleviating their writing anxiety. The following three research questions are examined in the study:

1. What is the level of preservice teachers' L2 writing anxiety?
2. Is the preservice teachers' writing fluency improved after participating in freewriting for one semester?
3. At the end of the semester, what do the preservice teachers perceive to be advantages and disadvantages of freewriting?

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

Seventeen students (female = 14, male = 3) in an English writing course at a university in Korea participated in the study. Fifteen of the students were majoring in English, and two were double-majoring in English and education. They were all enrolled in the university's teacher education program. To become certified as a secondary school EFL teacher in Korea, students generally enter a teacher's college that prepares them to take the national exam. Alternatively, students can join a teacher training program at a general university, such as the site of this study, where they take the required courses to earn a teaching certificate. The English writing course in which the participants were students is one of the required courses. The course is designed to help students improve their general and academic English writing ability as well as to gain knowledge about teaching writing.

At the beginning of the course, six of the participants (35.29%) chose writing as the skill in which they had the least confidence in their English; none chose writing as the skill in which they were most confident. Although they had an average of 13 years of English learning experience, 13 of them (76.47%) self-evaluated their writing level as mid-intermediate, three (17.65%) as high-intermediate, and one (5.88%) as beginning. None of the students had previously studied abroad.

3.2. Instruments

Four instruments were used to explore the three research questions in the study. First, a background survey was distributed at the beginning of the semester to gather basic information about the participants, and to ask them to rate their perceived English ability in the four skills. Second, a survey developed by Cheng et al. (1999) was employed, with some adaptations, to measure students' writing anxiety. The survey contained 20 items for participants to rate on a 5-point Likert scale, from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. The survey items, which revealed relatively high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .873$), were quantitatively analyzed focusing on writing aversiveness, writing confidence, and fear of evaluation.

Third, all of the participants' 10 freewritings, which amounts to 170 freewritings in total, were collected to analyze their possible fluency development over the semester. In the first week of the course, the participants took part in a workshop to inform them about the freewriting activity, including its aims, procedures, and potential benefits. From week 2 to 12, except for the midterm period, they wrote one freewriting per week. Topics of freewriting were general, and did not require any specific knowledge. The instructor suggested the topic for the first freewriting, but the rest were decided based on the participants' suggestions. Topics included, for example, "What are your strategies to cope with the coronavirus blues?"; "What do you do when you are stressed?"; and "Where do you see yourself in five years?" Lastly, the preservice teachers were asked to write a short reflection on the freewriting experience at the end of the semester. They wrote about their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of freewriting, along with suggestions to make the activity more useful. They were asked to write their reflections in English, but to feel free to switch to Korean to make themselves clear, if necessary. For analysis, keywords representing their perceived advantages and disadvantages were sorted out first, and they were tallied.

3.3. Procedures

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, these English writing courses were normally taught face-to-face and included pair group activities, such as collaborative writing and peer feedback. Freewriting usually took place as a regular class activity at the beginning of class; the instructor would set a timer and present a topic, either selected by the instructor or negotiated with the preservice teachers. Then, the whole class would write about the topic for 10 minutes. The instructor would encourage the preservice teacher-students to keep writing without stopping and to overcome their urge to look words up in a dictionary, and remind them not to worry about accuracy too much as it can slow writing or even lead to feeling stuck. When the time was up, the students would stop writing, and reread what they had

written. Making corrections was not encouraged but was allowed.

However, this study took place during the pandemic, when the course was implemented online. Although the procedure was broadly the same, it seemed possible that the students might not always concentrate on their writing for the full 10 minutes when freewriting alone, in the absence of the tacit pressure provided by the whole class writing together. In this respect, the workshop session on freewriting was highly essential. The online workshop included 10 minutes of freewriting and the chance for the participants to share their thoughts about their expectations for engaging in the activity for one semester. In addition, they were informed, as usual, that their freewritings would not be graded and that the primary purpose of the freewriting activity was to improve their writing fluency, not accuracy. Increasing writing confidence, decreasing writing anxiety, and developing writing habits were also mentioned as potential benefits.

To sum up, for this study, the preservice teacher–students individually participated in 10-minute freewriting by themselves at home. They could choose either handwriting or typing using Microsoft Word, but were strictly instructed not to use any reference materials while writing. They were allowed to write unknown English words in Korean, but told to do so as little as possible. After each freewriting, they counted the total words they had produced and recorded the number on their fluency chart. They were required to upload their freewriting (as a computer file or as a picture of a handwritten product) onto the online classroom platform each week.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Preservice Teachers' L2 Writing Anxiety

The participants' responses to the survey were analyzed first to examine their level of anxiety towards L2 writing. As Table 1 indicates, the participants' L2 writing anxiety involved all three constructs used in the survey—aversiveness, lack of confidence, and fear of evaluation—to some degree, with lack of confidence as the biggest contributor to their writing anxiety.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics of L2 Writing Anxiety (5-point Likert Scale)

	Aversiveness	Lack of Confidence	Fear of Evaluation
<i>M</i>	2.61	3.26	2.26
<i>SD</i>	0.67	0.92	0.96
Max	4.00	5.00	4.20
Min	1.60	1.80	1.00

Note. $N = 17$

4.2. Improvement of L2 Writing Fluency

In order to examine whether and to what extent the participants' writing fluency improved over the semester, individuals' freewritings were analyzed, using words per minute (wpm) as a fluency measure (Wolfe Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998). Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics of wpm from the first to the last of the 10 freewritings for all participants combined. Overall, they wrote an average of 98.12 words in their first freewriting (9.81 wpm) and an average of 168.06 words in their last freewriting, thus increasing their word total by 69.94 words or 6.99 wpm. A paired-samples t-test indicated a significant difference between wpm at the first freewriting ($M = 9.81$; $SD = 3.05$) and wpm at the last freewriting ($M = 16.81$; $SD = 5.11$); [$t(16) = 7.353, p = .00$].

However, it is worth noting the large differences among the 17 participants. The gap between the maximum and minimum wpm for each freewriting is large. In addition, the standard deviations increase toward the end of the semester, which indicates that the gap became larger. Due to this noticeable gap, they were further divided into two groups, a high fluency group and a low fluency group, based on the mean of the first freewriting (wpm = 9.81): Students who wrote more than 9.81 wpm were assigned to the high fluency group ($n = 9$), while those who wrote less were considered the low fluency group ($n = 8$). An independent samples t-test found a significant difference between the high fluency group ($M = 11.97$; $SD = 2.45$) and the low fluency group ($M = 7.39$; $SD = 1.29$); [$t(15) = 4.719, p = .00$]. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of wpm from the first to the last of the 10 freewritings for the two groups.

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics of Ten Freewritings

	FW1	FW2	FW3	FW4	FW5	FW6	FW7	FW8	FW9	FW10
<i>M</i>	98.12	130.59	137.88	138	146.18	148.12	165.71	157.88	162.59	168.06
<i>SD</i>	29.57	32.96	46.87	40.58	44.90	44.87	51.99	54.84	50.22	49.54
Max	174	219	224	223	239	239	276	267	269	272
Min	54	54	32	59	66	67	76	66	61	78
WPM	9.81	13.06	13.79	13.8	14.62	14.81	16.57	15.79	16.26	6.81

Note. $N = 17$; FW = freewriting; WPM = words per minute

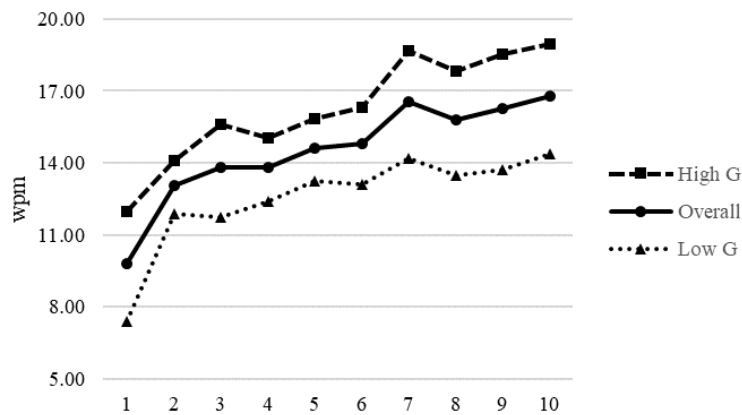
TABLE 3
WPMs of High and Low Fluency Groups

		FW1	FW2	FW3	FW4	FW5	FW6	FW7	FW8	FW9	FW10
High	<i>M</i>	11.97	14.10	15.62	15.06	15.86	16.31	18.69	17.83	18.53	18.98
(n=9)	<i>SD</i>	2.31	3.17	3.91	3.12	3.86	3.56	4.80	4.08	3.54	3.42
Low	<i>M</i>	7.39	11.89	11.73	12.39	13.23	13.13	14.19	13.49	13.70	14.36
(n=8)	<i>SD</i>	1.21	3.03	4.63	4.50	4.73	4.81	4.56	5.93	5.21	5.26

Note. *N* = 17

Overall, as the line graph in Figure 1 shows, the preservice teacher–students made a gradual, smooth increase in wpm over the 10 freewritings. Looking at the two fluency groups, both demonstrate a similar upward trend. More specifically, all the participants’ wpm jumped considerably on the second freewriting, with a greater increase in the low fluency group. While the high fluency group continued to improve on the third freewriting, the low fluency group’s wpm slightly decreased. A gradual increase in wpm is then observed from the fourth to the seventh writings in both groups, with a relatively large increase on the seventh writing, which, however, was followed by a slight decrease on the eighth writing in both groups. It is notable that the gap between the groups in week 1 is maintained through the end of the semester.

FIGURE 1
Increase of WPM over the Ten Freewritings



The present study further examined whether writing fluency could be related to writing anxiety by employing a Pearson’s correlation coefficient to explore how fluency was related to the three constructs of writing anxiety used in the survey: aversiveness, fear of evaluation, and lack of confidence. The first freewriting wpm was negatively associated with aversiveness and confidence in L2 writing, but not statistically significantly. Aversiveness

was positively related to lack of confidence ($r = .495$) and fear of evaluation ($r = .591$), both at statistically significant levels ($p < .05$). When the three constructs' associations with anxiety were explored separately by fluency-level group, only lack of confidence had a negative correlation with writing fluency; however, it was almost negligible (high fluency group: $r = -.084$; low fluency group: $r = .194$). These results may suggest that writing anxiety is not associated with writing fluency but general for this preservice teacher group.

4.3. Perceived Benefits of Freewriting

Next, the 17 participants' reflections on freewriting, written in English and collected at the end of the semester, were analyzed. The following keywords were noted. Regarding the benefits of freewriting, the participants frequently used words/phrases such as "overcome the fear," "increase confidence," "enjoy," "do not worry," "helpful," "useful," "writing skills," "comfortable," and "no pressure." They described the shortcomings of freewriting using words/phrases like "short time," "no feedback," "grammar," "same words," "same structure," and "not interesting topics." For the analysis, all the words indicating advantages and disadvantages were counted; the six most mentioned features for each are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Pros and Cons of Freewriting Based on Student Reflections

Pros	Counts (%)
1. Overcoming fear or pressure of writing	9 (23.08%)
2. Increasing confidence	9 (23.08%)
3. Expressing thoughts freely	8 (20.51%)
4. Improving writing skills	6 (15.38%)
5. Not requiring accuracy	6 (15.38%)
6. Building writing habits and increasing practice	6 (15.38%)
Cons	
1. Lack of various topics	5 (23.81%)
2. Difficult to write for 10min	5 (23.81%)
3. Using the same words or patterns	4 (19.05%)
4. Not sure of the overall usefulness	3 (14.29%)
5. No feedback	2 (9.52%)
6. Pressure from the time limit	2 (9.52%)

As Table 4 shows, the two useful aspects of freewriting mentioned most frequently were that it helped overcome or alleviate the fear of English writing and increased the writer's confidence in their L2 writing. Several participants mentioned that they enjoyed the freedom in expressing their thoughts and feelings, and the absence of the need to worry about

accuracy, which is rare in academic environments. In addition, six participants found freewriting useful for improving their writing skills and building L2 writing habits. One participant further mentioned that freewriting was helpful for consolidating thinking. On the other hand, among the disadvantages, the two most frequently mentioned were the lack of various topics and the difficulty of concentrating on English writing without stopping for 10 minutes. Some of the participants further expressed concern about finding themselves using the same structures or words repeatedly, and two mentioned that they would have preferred to have feedback from the writing teacher.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The first research question aimed to assess the level of L2 writing anxiety felt by the participants, 17 preservice teachers enrolled in an L2 writing class. The survey findings revealed that most of the preservice teachers felt a lack of confidence in their L2 writing. As most of the participants also considered their proficiency level to be intermediate, generally had limited writing experience, and had never written a full essay in English before, this lack of confidence is reasonable. It also aligns with Park's (2020) findings on Korean ESL students' writing anxiety, although for that student group, the fear of evaluation came second, whereas the preservice teachers in the current study felt aversion to L2 writing and fear of evaluation to similar degrees.

The second research question explored to what extent the preservice teachers improved in terms of their L2 writing fluency, as measured by wpm, after engaging in the freewriting practice for one academic semester. The participants demonstrated relatively slow wpm, at an average of 9.81, on their first freewriting. Compared to previous studies, this was higher than what Hwang (2010) found (wpm = 6.35) and similar to what was reported by Park (2020, wpm = 10.08). This low fluency may indicate that the preservice teachers had difficulties putting their thoughts onto paper, or that they hesitated or rewrote several times to produce accurate sentences; any of these behaviors might indicate that they needed time to adjust to freewriting, which was a new practice for most of them. In any case, after practicing freewriting for one semester, the participants' speed had increased to 16.81 wpm, or by 58.36% (compare to the results reported by Hwang, 2010, of 10.22 wpm, and Park, 2020, of 15 wpm).

The increased speed could, arguably, be due to a practice effect or a factor like lower writing anxiety as the participants became familiar with the freewriting practice, rather than from any actual improvement in fluency. Nonetheless, if the freewriting was useful for alleviating students' anxiety about L2 writing, such an effect could be a starting point for the overall improvement of their L2 writing. Increasing the volume of L2 writing is a first step

toward improving the accuracy and quality of the writing, which is why fluency-oriented instruction should go hand in hand with accuracy-oriented instruction in the L2 writing classroom.

It is worth noting, however, that there were large individual differences among the participants in the present study. The gap between the high and low fluency groups' wpm was distinctive from the beginning, and it was hardly reduced over time. It may be that one semester is not enough to bring a whole cohort to the same level of fluency when they start at different levels, or that other learner variables such as writing motivation or anxiety are intertwined with individual learners' fluency in a complex manner. Another finding worth mentioning is the influence of topic. Both groups demonstrated a relatively big jump in wpm on the seventh freewriting, when they were asked to write about their family (i.e., "How much time do you spend with your family? What do you usually do together? If you don't spend much time with your family, why?"). This topic may have been the one most familiar to all the students, and thus they had more to say, which indicates the importance of preparing familiar topics to which students can relate for freewriting activities. However, the participants also complained about the lack of variety in the topics; selecting topics that are both sufficiently interesting and sufficiently familiar is a challenge for instructors.

The third research question further probed the preservice teachers' perceptions of the freewriting activity. Their written reflections revealed that the freewriting activity was not only helpful for overcoming their fear of writing but also for increasing their confidence in L2 writing, which was also reported as benefits in Hwang (2010) and Park (2020). Given that the writing anxiety survey showed that most of the preservice teachers felt a lack of confidence in their L2 writing, this finding is meaningful. Being able to express their thoughts freely without much concern for accuracy seemed to have eased their writing apprehension as well. However, keeping writing for 10 minutes without stopping was still difficult for the preservice teachers. In particular, those who did not find the topic interesting might not have had much to say, which in turn could lead to some loss of interest in writing. In addition, some participants expressed concerns about using the same sentence patterns or structures over and over. This may be because, given the time pressure, they selected words or structures they felt confident in so that they could finish writing, despite accuracy not being the primary concern of freewriting. Taken together, these findings indicate the importance of sentence-level practice in the L2 writing classroom.

As discussed, this study revealed benefits of freewriting, albeit not dramatic changes, such as the gains in the rate of writing and more writing confidence with decreased anxiety. In addition, in support of Hwang (2010), Park (2020), Penn and Lim (2016), the study showed the possibility of incorporating freewriting into academic English classrooms. One of the best merits of freewriting is that it takes little time. Inside or outside the classroom, only 10–15 minutes for each session is needed. Furthermore, given the online setting, the study

demonstrated that preservice teachers themselves can lead their own practice without much guidance from the instructor. From the perspective of learner autonomy, freewriting is a practice that students can do by themselves without much supervision. The role of the instructor in freewriting can be minimal, and simply “instrumental” (Rivers, 2007, p. 11), in which creating an effective atmosphere and environment for writing would suffice. In future research, it would be useful to further examine whether students will keep practicing freewriting by themselves after a semester of practice. If instructions can help students establish a habit of freewriting, their writing experience will continue to increase, thereby encouraging their confidence in their L2 writing. Laying the foundation for such a virtuous cycle is what L2 writing teachers should aim for.

Furthermore, taking the students’ suggestions in this study, freewriting practice could be tailored to individual EFL contexts. For example, the students could choose the topics; to ensure the topics were appropriate, teachers could provide a list of topics that the students could choose from each week (e.g., Nguyen, 2015). For content courses, freewriting can be used as a tool for summarizing or reviewing (e.g., Li, 2007). In addition, as revealed in this study, many students still want to receive teacher feedback. Dealing with some common language errors made by students could be an alternative way to meet student needs (Park, 2020). Moreover, freewriting can be integrated with other skills of English, such as speaking (e.g., Penn & Lim, 2016) or reading (e.g., Park, 2016). Freewriting can also be integrated with *writing to read* where students write freely about a topic on which they are about to read, thereby improving comprehension and possibly leading them to utilize reading strategies such as predicting.

The findings should be cautiously interpreted, however, considering the following limitations. First, the present study is a case study, and did not intend to produce findings that could be generalized. The freewriting practice was implemented for a relatively short period of time with a small number of participants. It is worth noting, however, that freewriting was incorporated into the teacher training program in order to raise the participants’ awareness of the importance of developing writing fluency and to give them the opportunity to experience the pros and cons of freewriting for themselves. Second, it cannot be claimed that the increase in wpm is solely derived from the freewriting practice, as the students not only practiced freewriting but also received instruction about academic writing. Future studies could include a control group to better understand the true benefits of freewriting. Lastly, although the student reflections revealed the usefulness of freewriting for mitigating the students’ writing anxiety, an additional post-survey on L2 writing anxiety would have been useful to directly compare their responses before and after the semester of freewriting practice.

Applicable level: Tertiary

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