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Comparison of Different Types of Writing and Individual, Pair, and Group Work on English Writing Tasks

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This study investigated the effects of different types of student grouping on their English writing. 37 students who took 'Basic English Composition' class participated in the study. The data collection consisted of a survey with closed and open-ended questions, and an individual interview with a selected group of students. The survey questionnaire was analyzed through descriptive statistics with closed-ended questions and content analysis with open-ended questions. The class observation and the transcript of the students' interview were examined by constant comparison. First, the researcher found that students considered 'opinion' writing the most difficult while 'narrative' writing the easiest one: however, they also reported that 'opinion' writing was the most enjoyable because they enjoyed the challenge of doing more research and expressing their own ideas logically. In addition, nearly half of the students preferred individual work to pair work or group work because they thought their writing skills were improved more while working independently: pair work was their second choice, followed by group work. However, many students also recognized the positive effect of collaborative writing as they could share ideas and receive feedback from other students even though some reservations were also identified. Pedagogical implications drawing on the findings were discussed.

[individual work/pair work/group work/collaborative writing/students' perspective/ L2 writing]

I. INTRODUCTION

As Nunan (2000) stated, writing is usually considered the most difficult and complex skill to acquire for language learners because it involves how to control content, format,

sentence structure, vocabulary, and punctuation along with structuring and integrating information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs (Hyland, 2003). However, the ability to write effectively and fluently in English is becoming more essential, and one of the main requirements in English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Biria & Jafari, 2013).

While writing is generally thought of as an individual achievement from the cognitive perspective (Cooper, 1986; Tavakoli & Rezazadeh, 2014), more and more people have paid attention to the collaborative nature of writing, drawing on the social constructivist framework of learning supported by the work of Vygotsky (1978). That is, knowledge is negotiated and acquired through interaction so learning how to write in foreign languages is a social process that requires learners to socially interact with teachers or classmates. Collaborative writing is related to the situation when learners work together with a shared responsibility to produce one written text (Biria & Jafari, 2013; Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2005; 2011). While language learners are encouraged to be responsible for their own learning, they are sometimes required to work collaboratively and through this cognitive process, they learn from one another in order to complete various types of tasks (Shehadeh, 2011).

Since learning to write in foreign language takes a lot of time and effort, the role of English writing instruction in foreign languages is an indispensable part of the language classroom (Weigle, 2002). One instruction decision teachers can make and influence the students' writing is the type of writing tasks. Depending on different features of writing tasks, such as process writing or argumentative writing, the degree in which learners are able to learn and practice with the task could be quite varied (Foster & Skehan, 1996). Students for this study also learned how to write paragraph writing first and then were given a series of writing tasks which required them to write different types of paragraph such as definition, narrative or argument because paragraph writing is the foundation of essay writing. Thus, it would be interesting to investigate how these different types of paragraph writing can affect the way Korean university students view English writing.

Also, the fact that whether the task is carried out in individual, pair, or group work can result in differences in learners' writing. In the traditional writing class, writing tends to be done individually, but in university contexts, group or pair writing activities are widely used (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). Research on collaborative writing with L2 learners has shown positive results (Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2005; Tavakoli & Rezazadeh, 2014). While most previous research on writing compared only collaborative group work to individual work, or pair work to individual work, there have been only a few studies comparing students' attitudes toward individual, pair, and group work for English writing, especially in Korean contexts. Thus, the current study sought a better understanding of Korean university students' perceptions on different types of paragraph writing and group

formations when they engage in writing tasks. In order to achieve this purpose, post-task survey and individual interview were carried out. The current study set out to investigate the following research questions:

1. How did students react toward different types of English writing?
2. What were students' attitudes toward individual, pair, and group work on the English writing task?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Different Types of English Writing

Researchers (Franklin, 1986; Hudelson, 1986, 1989; Zamel, 1987) have argued that writing may be different with respect to several contextual factors, and these differences in types of writing can exert significant effects on the writings that students produce and on their progress over time. However, as Lee (2012) claimed, there have been few studies which have addressed how different nature and qualities of the formal and informal writings influence students' writing in EFL context. Paragraph English writing EFL students generally learn at school are summarized as follows:

- Expository - Writing in which author's purpose is to inform or explain the subject to the reader.
- Persuasive - Writing that states the opinion of the writer and attempts to influence the reader.
- Narrative - Writing in which the author tells a story. The story could be fact or fiction.
- Descriptive - A type of expository writing that uses the five senses to paint a picture for the reader. This writing incorporates imagery and specific details.

In order to examine how types of writing affect Korean university students' writing performance, Lee (2012) examined three different types of writing – description, comparison, and contrast to see the effect of different types of writing on Korean university students' performance. The result revealed that types of writing have significant influence in terms of its quantity and quality. It turned out that the comparison/contrast essay was the most cognitively demanding, complex type of writing, while a greater variety of clause connectors was most frequently used in the descriptive essay. In addition, comparison and contrast texts showed different cohesive qualities from descriptive writing with

significantly less use of repetition. With these results, she concluded that EFL students should have more opportunities to write in a variety of contexts and conditions in order to enhance their writing proficiency. As her study shows, it is evident that types of writing have influence on EFL students' writing performance to some degree; thus, it is essential and useful to investigate how EFL university students react toward different types of English writing they engage in during class.

2. Different Formation of Students on L2 Writing Tasks

When it comes to student grouping, there is the spectrum from individualized learning to group work. From cognitive perspective, L2 writing is an individual work, which requires students to do writing on their own and it is "a vital step in the development of learner autonomy (Harmer, 2007, p. 164). Some advantages of individualized learning are: 1) it allows teachers to respond to individual students' differences in terms of pace of learning, learning styles and preferences; 2) It is likely to be less stressful for students than performing in a whole-class setting or working in pairs or groups; and 3) it can develop learner autonomy and promote skills of self-reliance and investigation over teacher-dependence.

On the other hand, from the sociocultural approach, collaborative writing is viewed as a social process occurring through interaction among learners in situated contexts (Dobao, 2012) and it enables learners to interact and challenge their knowledge in a more effective learning context (Willis, 1996). McDonough (2004, p. 208) also claimed that "pair and small group activities provide learners with more time to speak the target language than teacher-fronted activities, promote learner autonomy and self-directed learning, and give instructors opportunities to work with individual learners."

Pair work is a type of group work but with it, students work in a group of two and it is more appropriate than group work for tasks or activities that are short, linguistically simple and controlled in terms of the structure (Brown, 2007). Since peer learning is a two-way reciprocal activity in which students with the same level learn from each other by sharing their cognitive resources and modifying solutions (Boud, 2001), learners working in pairs can lower their anxiety level and lessen the feeling of burden while working on their writing (McDonough, 2004). Nonetheless, not all pair work equally contributes to learning and language development. It can benefit two learners at the same time only if they provide scaffolded assistance to each other and share different resources including language knowledge and writing experience with each other (Dobao, 2012).

Along with pair work, group work, especially small sized group work is considered to benefit learners in various aspects (Dobao, 2012; Kwon, 2014,). Brown (2007, p. 224) described group work as "two or more students are assigned a task that involves

collaboration and self-initiated language" and it refers to 'small' groups with students in groups of six or fewer and give them more opportunities to speak. Some advantages of group work include: 1) generating interactive language; 2) offering an embracing affective climate; 3) promoting learner responsibility and autonomy; and 4) serving as a step toward individualizing instruction. However, working in a group can sometimes create problems among the participants because there are various opinions and writing styles involved in order to produce one final product that meets everyone's expectation.

3. Related Previous Studies on Effects and Perspectives on Individual and Collaborative Writing

In relation to language learners' perspectives toward collaborative learning, studies have showed that learners have a positive attitude towards collaborative writing tasks (Dobao & Blum, 2013; Kwon, 2014; Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2005; Tai, 2015). In addition, these studies measured grammatical accuracy most and revealed its improvement was most after collaborative writing, although some studies exhibited a positive effect on other aspects of language including lexical accuracy and variety.

Storch (2005) explored the effectiveness of collaborative pair work when students produced a written text either in pairs or individually. What she found was that students who produced written language collaboratively wrote shorter but grammatically more accurate and more complex texts along more appropriate use of vocabulary compared with those who produced them individually.

Drawing on the previous studies on collaborative writing from the sociocultural perspective, Dobao attempted to look into the effect of individuals, pairs and groups on the fluency, complexity, and accuracy of the written texts produced, as well as the nature of the oral interaction while the pairs and the groups collaborated throughout the writing process. First of all, the texts written by the groups were more accurate than those written individually or in pairs. Also, the analysis of the interaction revealed that groups produced more language related episodes (LREs) and a higher percentage of correctly resolved LREs than individuals or pairs.

In order to find out the effects and leaners' perceptions of collaborative writing in a foreign language context, Shehadeh (2011) conducted an experiment with 38 first year students at a large university in the United Arab Emirates. Writing tasks were carried out by the students individually and in pairs during sixteen weeks through a pre- and post-test. Analysis of the results indicated that collaborative writing had an overall significant effect on students' L2 writing. However, the effect was mixed as most students found it effective for content, organization, and vocabulary, but not for grammar or mechanics. In addition, a majority of the students replied that the experience of working collaboratively was

enjoyable and contributed to their L2 learning.

In a more recent study on collaborative writing, Tai (2015) investigated the effect of collaboration on L2 Omani students writing and their attitudes to collaboration. The analysis revealed that collaborative writing positively affects accuracy, fluency and lexical resources of the texts while many students perceived collaborative writing positively. Drawing on the findings, she concluded that group work has an advantage over individual writing to some extent. In a similar study, Tai (2015) examined the effect of collaboration on Omani students' writing and their attitudes toward collaborative writing by dividing students into individuals, pairs and groups. The analysis of the study indicated that collaborative writing affects accuracy, fluency, and lexical use in a positive way. In terms of the attitude, group rather than pairs was considered to have advantages over independent individual writing by the students.

However, there are some studies which have revealed some reservation on collaborative work from learners. Kwon (2014) carried out classroom action research in a Writing and Presentation skills class at a university in Thailand to examine the students' perspectives on the collaborative writing tasks they were involved with by collecting qualitative and quantitative data. What he discovered was that most students perceived group work positively, however, they also experienced some difficulties, including differing proficiency levels within groups, problems in decision-making processes, and relationships with their partners.

In the Korean context, only a few studies have looked into the effect of collaborative writing. Kim (2008) investigated collaborative dialogue and think-aloud protocols of pair and individual groups of Korean students in pretest, dictogloss task, and posttest. While both groups engaged in a similar number of language related episodes (LREs) in their dialogue, pairs performed significantly better on vocabulary tests than individuals.

Overall, studies comparing the benefits of individual and collaborative work support its application for pedagogical purpose for learning and teaching writing. However, there is still a gap as most of the studies used only a survey method to investigate learners' perspectives on the issue, and there is relatively little information known regarding Korean language learners' attitudes toward collaborative work on English writing.

III. METHOD

1. Participants and Context

The study was conducted in a university in a major city in Korea. The study was carried out in the spring semester of 2016 and 37 students (22 female students and 15 male

students) participated in the study. They were majoring in English Language and Literature and took 'Basic English Composition,' which was required. This class was designed to enhance students' writing ability by focusing on paragraph writing and different types of writing which have an impact on the students' writing development. The students met once a week and the class lasted three hours. During the semester, the students were required to complete two writing tasks in individual work, two in pair work and one in group work of various topics as seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Different Genre of Writing and Writing Tasks

Task	Genre of Writing	Type of Writing Tasks
Task1	Process writing	Individual work
Taks2	Narrative writing	Individual work
Task3	Descriptive writing	Pair work
Task4	Argumentative writing	Pair work
Task5	Opinion writing	Group work

In order to avoid interference from outside, all writing was completed during class time. For the first two writing tasks, students were asked to write a process and a narrative writing individually. For the third and fourth writing tasks, the students were given a chance to select a partner they would like to work together with in order to complete the tasks. Each pair was required to work from the brainstorming stage to the final product. However, with opinion writing, task 4, four students were put into a group and worked on a given topic: they were required to write a script for their presentation.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data for the study were collected by means of class observation, a student survey and individual interviews with some selected groups of students at the end of the semester to enhance the reliability of the students' self-reported comments. During the semester, the researcher observed the students' writing activities and took field notes, which included commentaries, assumptions, questions, reactions, interpretations and descriptions of tasks the students were required to do. The careful analysis of the field notes helped the research to construct the student questionnaire. The survey questionnaire consisted of the closed and open-ended question items. The closed questions have five items regarding the background information of the participants and

five items with follow-up questions, each asking the students' perspectives on writing and different types of writing tasks. There were 12 open-ended questions and they mainly asked about their perceptions of writing genres on which they wrote and types of writing tasks as well. Finally, four students who agreed to participate were invited to 10-15 minute interviews about their attitudes toward collaborative writing, group presentation and individual writing.

When it comes to analysis of the collected data, descriptive statistics were employed with closed-ended questions based on the frequency and percentage of the students' response to each given question. With open-ended questions of the survey and interview transcript, open coding was used to find any common themes which emerged from the data. Coding is considered a process for both categorizing qualitative data and for describing the implications and details of these categories (Evans & Rooney, 2008). During the initial open coding, the data were examined in minute detail while developing some categories. After that, more selective coding was conducted to discover more detailed codes or themes.

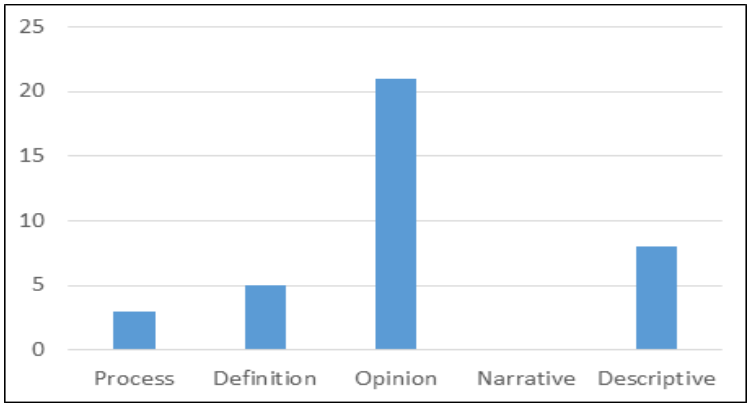
Initially the researcher did open coding, considering the data in detail while developing some initial categories. Later, the process moved to more selective coding where the researcher systematically coded the data drawing on a core concept. The coding was framed based on individual work, pair work, and group work, and more sub-categories were identified.

IV. FINDINGS

1. Effects of Different Types of English Writing

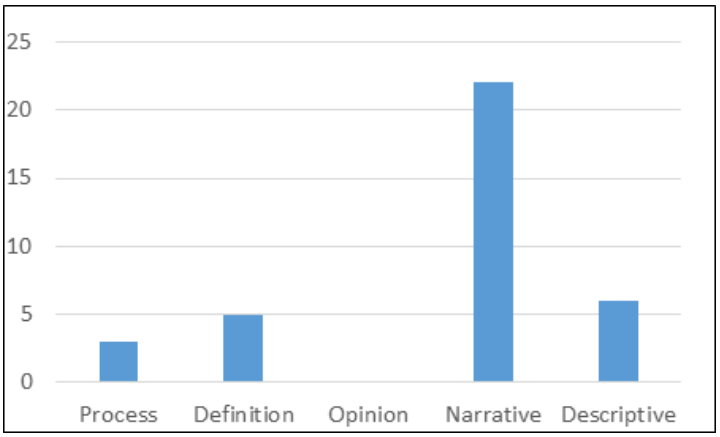
Before examining students′ attitudes toward group formations for English writing, they were asked questions related to different types of paragraph writing they had learned and wrote about during class (see Figure 1). The first question required students to answer which types of writing they felt most difficult and as seen in Figure 1, 21 out of 37 students (56%) chose 'opinion' writing the most difficult one, followed by 'descriptive' (8, 21%), 'definition process' (5, 13%), and 'process' (4, 10%) each. None of the students had difficulty with 'narrative' writing and the reasons were explained through the results of the open-ended questions and the interview.

FIGURE 1
The Most Difficult Genre of Writing



Students felt that ‘opinion’ writing was not easy because they had to first organize their own ideas along with counter arguments and it has to be logically explained, but they did not know appropriate ways to express it in English. Thus, in order to make the ‘opinion’ writing better, the students needed not only to improve their English but train themselves to think logically and put ideas together. ‘Descriptive’ writing also caused difficulty for some students because they were short of vocabulary, especially adjectives to describe things or people they would like to write about in detail. In the case of ′definition′ writing, the students simply stated that they did not know how to define terms even in Korean so it prevented them from writing a good definition paragraph.

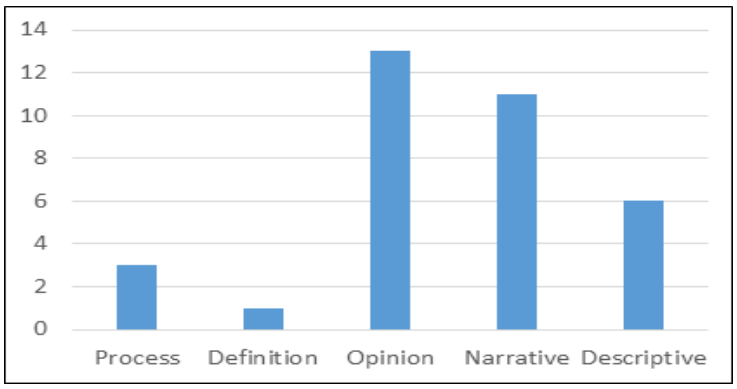
FIGURE 2
The Easiest Genre of Writing



In a similar vein, to the question ‘which types of writing was the easiest one,’ 22 students (59%) selected ‘narrative’ writing as the type of writing they did not have much trouble with because they carried out the composition just like the way they talk to someone about their own stories and experience (see Figure 2). Also, some students pointed out that narrative writing allowed them to write about their own story so they felt that they owned the writing itself. This result is supported by Tomlinson (2010) who claimed that activities or tasks should be personalized and localized so they can meet students′ needs, wants, and learning styles. In contrary to this, none of the students considered ‘opinion’ writing easy.

FIGURE 3

The Most Enjoyable Genre of Writing



As Figure 3 displays, which types of writing the students enjoyed most was also inquired into. The result of this question was very interesting as 13 students (35%) chose ‘opinion’ as their favorite one. To the previous question regarding which type of writing they experienced most problem, their top choice was ‘opinion’ writing as well. This finding can be interpreted that even though many students had difficulty writing argument and counter-argument paragraphs, they liked the way opinion writing challenges and leads them to compose a logical and opinionated piece of written work. One student wrote, “I felt rewarding after completing it because I was able to suggest and argue for my own opinion on the topic I was interested in.” Less high as ‘opinion’ writing, but ‘narrative’ writing (11, 29%), and ‘descriptive’ writing (6, 16 %) were ranked the students’ favorite ones as well. When it comes to ‘descriptive’ writing, students noted that they enjoyed composing it because the process of searching for words or expressions to depict expressions in various ways enriched their writing products. Also, they were assigned to work with a partner while working on the descriptive writing, the process of completing the task was very enjoyable and easy. From these findings, it can be concluded that while

some genres of writing like ‘opinion’ and ‘descriptive’ could throw some challenges and limit students to produce a good piece of writing, experience of dealing with these types of writing helped them to develop their writing skills and satisfaction as well. The results also suggested that if teachers apply group formation differently depending on the types of writing, the process and outcome of the writing task could be changed to more positive outcomes. Given this, the next section suggests supplemental exercises that would fill the gaps in textbooks.

2. Students’ Perspectives of Different Types of Grouping

This section focused on examining how students viewed individual and collaborative writing tasks they engaged in while completing in-class writing tasks. First, they were asked which types of writing work they liked most, and 17 out of 37 students (46%) answered that they preferred individual work to pair or group work. In other words, 54% of the students showed a positive attitude toward collaborative writing tasks, especially pair work while 46 % of them chose individual work as their preference. Pair work was their second choice (11, 30%), followed by group work (9, 24%).This result is a little different, yet similar from what Tai (2015) found as L2 Omani students in her study prefer to work individually but have a strong belief that collaborative writing has a positive influence on their performance. This result can be understood as the students had positive perspectives toward collaborative writing in general, but at the same time, almost half of them also wanted to work independently. This outcome reflects the complex nature of foreign language writing that is considered as an individual achievement, but social and collaborative work at the same time (Cooper, 1986; Hyland, 2003).

In order to have an in-depth insight of the students’ views, the students were requested to provide further explanations for their responses through open-ended questions and interview questions.

1) Individual Work

(1) Freedom and Flexibility: Developing English Writing Skills

During the semester, the students were required to do two in-class individual writing tasks. Regarding this individual work, they were asked of strong points and weakness of individual writing work.

TABLE 2

Strong Points of Individual Writing

Strong Points	# of students (%)
1. Can improve English writing skills	11 (30%)
2. Write on a topic they want by applying what they learned and studied	10 (27%)
3. Can be flexible on schedule and feel comfortable	7 (19%)
4. Can improve overall English ability	4 (11%)
5. Can recognize their potential and limit	3 (8%)
6. Can concentrate on the writing well	2 (5%)
Total	37

As Table 2 presents, 11 students (30%) believed that through individual writing tasks, they were able to improve their overall English writing skills. Student K claimed because he had to work on every aspect of writing including grammar, vocabulary or organization by himself, he felt that his writing was improved a lot. One possible explanation beyond the students' remark was the fact that working individually enabled them to concentrate more on practicing and writing and as a result, it led to the improvement of their overall English writing skills.

In addition, 10 students (27%) students liked autonomous writing since they had the freedom to choose a topic they wanted to write about and maneuver the process of the writing. It was followed by students' preference of being flexible in terms of scheduling and comfortable working with their partner (7, 19%). These results are well reflected by student L' s statement regarding individual writing tasks:

> I think English writing is a more of task that is mainly involved with individual styles and preference, so it would take too much time and efforts to communicate with others if you work with a partner or a group of people. Working alone seemed to bring more concentrations and lead to a great improvement in writing (Student L, Interview)

The students' preference for individual work over collaborative work might be the result of the fact that most of them are not accustomed to working with others while writing in English. Korean learners are more familiar with solitary writing and a context in which the teachers and books are the sole source of knowledge.

(2) Limitation of Thoughts and Lack of Feedback

While many students preferred individual writing tasks, students also pointed out some weakness of individual writing as well.

TABLE 3
Weak Points of Individual Writing

Weakness	# of students
1. Feel limited and repetitive in terms of topic choice and expression	10 (27%)
2. Feel difficulty evaluating their writing without receiving feedback	9 (24%)
3. Take longer time to complete the writing	7 (19%)
4. Ended up writing less tuned product	5 (13%)
5. Feel difficulty sharing ideas and advice	4 (11%)
6. Feel less motivated	2 (5%)
Total	37

10 students (27%) wrote that by working alone, they had problems when selecting topics or words and expressions they would like to use in writing. This result is related to the next item where 9 students (24%) responded that the lack of feedback on their work was another major weakness of individual work.

> I felt limited when I worked alone on writing. Because there was no one to give me a feedback, I didn't know whether there were mistakes or not and there was (Student J, Interview)

> Many things seemed to be repeated because everything I wrote was from my own idea, and it took a lot of time to complete the writing if I work along. (Student K, Interview)

In a similar vein, 7students (19%) responded that they needed more time to complete the task when they worked alone. If they have someone whom they can rely on and provide immediate feedback, there would be more chances for them to reduce time while writing.

However, it also showed that in order for L2 students to move up to the next level where they could produce a good piece of writing, they need help from someone like their peers or teachers who can provide constructive feedback (Hyland, 2003; Pinter, 2003). These outcomes all indicate the need for implementing pair work in the L2 English writing

classroom. Generally speaking, students who preferred working independently seemed to believe that by working independently they would improve their writing skills more and increase creativity. However, writing could be co-constructed and with partners or other members of groups, there would be more chance for L2 students to learn how to write better and produce a written work that is superior to one done individually on most aspects of writing (Shehadeh, 2011).

2) Pair Work

(1) Sharing Ideas and Feedback and a Better Quality of Writing in a Short Period of Time

According to Macaro (1997), one of the characteristics of pair work is that pair interaction encouraged L2 use in a two-way information exchange, something different from one in group work. Like individual work, the students engaged in two different types of pair work during the class. They were given a chance to choose their own partner and worked on descriptive and definition writing respectively. For each task, pairs met their partner outside class to discuss their task. Due to some concerns regarding peer review or critique including students' ignorance of feedback from other students, these types of peer activity were not chosen.

TABLE 4

Strong Points of Pair Work on English Writing

Strong Points	**# of students (%)**
1. Can share ideas and feedback with the partner	14 (38%)
2. Can complete the writing in a relatively short period of time	7 (19%)
3. Can produce high quality of writing	7 (19%)
4. Can learn organization, style, or vocabulary from the partner	6 (16%)
5. Can feel achievement by helping each other	3 (8%)
Total	37

As Table 4 indicates, one main reason the students considered pair work effective was because they could share ideas and feedback with their partner (14, 38%). Kwon (2014) argued for the benefit of peer feedback in his study of collaborative writing that "peer feedback was a natural and organic process within collaborative writing as students were writing together to produce more and well-constructed texts" (p. 98). This result is supported by some students′ statements in their interview as well:

> When I worked with my partner, I was able to get a new and intriguing ideas I did not think before and by sharing the ideas and information, we were able to receive a good grade on our task. (Student A)

The students also showed their satisfaction with pair work because they could complete the task quickly (7, 19%) and yet with higher quality of their written work (7, 19%). While individual work helped the students to improve their writing skills, it usually takes more time to do it. Thus, by working side by side on a given topic, the students were likely to save time. The students also responded that they benefited from pair work because they were able to observe and learn from their partner about how to write and apply the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (6, 16%). In addition, some students pointed out that they were able to have a high sense of achievement by working with their partner (3, 8%). These outcomes are congruent by claims made by socio-cultural perspective which views writing "an activity which forms a focus for individual to seek cooperation and assistance from diverse people and resources" (Tavakoli & Rezazadeh, 2014, p. 86). Overall, sharing ideas and learning in a collaborative manner probably aided them to compose a good piece of writing that might have a better quality than one done individually.

(2) Difficulty in Reaching an Agreement, Slow Work, and Less Responsibility

TABLE 5

Weak Points of Pair Work on English Writing

Weakness	# of students
1. Feel difficulty reaching in an agreement	16 (44%)
2. Ended up writing the work different from my opinion/thought	7 (19%)
3. Feel difficulty dividing work evenly among the two	7 (19%)
4. Feel less responsibility relying on the partner	3 (8%)
5. Consume a lot of time merging two different pieces of writing	2 (5%)
6. Feel difficulty scheduling	2 (5%)
Total	37

However, students revealed some reservations toward working with a partner as well. 16 students (44%) expressed difficulty reaching a consensus when they tried to choose a topic or move toward the direction for their writing. Thus, it was not surprising to see that 7

students (19%) complained that their written work ended up quite different from what they originally intended to write.

Another issue some students (7, 19%) brought up was related to how to divide work evenly between partners. Student J described her unpleasant experience with her partner:

> While working together, I was really disappointed with the way my partner behaved. From the beginning, he did not show much interest or enthusiasm about the task so, he did not participate in the outside classroom meeting actively, so I had to do most work and I felt really frustrated. (Student J, Interview)

As student J commented, while working together lessoned the burden of finishing the work, students became less responsible as they knew that there was someone who would do the work for them and this type of drawback of pair work was found in Tai (2015)'s work as well. In order to avoid this problem, the students were allowed to work with someone they felt comfortable working together with: however, this approach was still not able to solve the problem completely.

Having different and varying ideas was one of the benefits of working in pair, but at the same time, it could work as another shortcoming because in order to negotiate and reach the final version of the writing, the students needed more time because they worked in pair. This was a contradicting result as some students answered that they were able to save time to finish the task. This might be the outcome influenced by some factors such as different level of the students' proficiency, the degree of their closeness with their partner or familiarity of the given topic. Along with it, some students also reported their difficulty scheduling meetings outside the classroom in order to prepare for the task. In sum, it was clearly noted that the students working in pairs were well aware of some positive effects of collaboration through sharing ideas and providing each other with immediate feedback, difficulty reaching an agreement and uncooperative attitudes from their partner could lead to some students preferring to work individually. Despite some negative attitudes expressed by some students, as the survey results indicated, more students preferred pair work (30%) to group work (24%).

3) Group Work

(1) Learning from Others: Sharing Ideas and Feedback

Group approach to writing is a viable alternative which addresses some of the concerns surrounding the more traditional approaches including solitary writing (Biria & Jafari, 2013). Thus, students in this study also had an opportunity to work as a group for the final task of the semester, and they were required to write a transcript for the given topic and do

presentations in front of other students. Before submitting the transcript and doing the presentation, each group scheduled to meet several times outside the classroom to make a plan and divide work among members. Like individual and pair work, the students were asked to report on the strong points of group work.

TABLE 6

Strong Points of Group Work on English Writing

Strong Points	# of students (%)
1. Can learn from other members of how to write or other linguistic aspects including vocabulary and grammar	9 (24%)
2. Can have a variety of ideas on a topic	7 (19%)
3. Can receive feedback	7 (19%)
4. Can feel less burden by helping one another and sharing work	6 (16%)
5. Can complete the work quickly in a more organized way	4 (11%)
6. Can get to know more closely and build up teamwork	4 (11%)
Total	37

As shown in Table 6, the first point made by the students was learning from other members of the group (9, 24%). Student P stated that she considered her experience working in her group valuable because she was able to observe and learn how other students approached the topic and create a good written work. In addition, 7 students (19%) noted that while pair work enabled them to share ideas and feedback, working in a group provided them with more diverse ideas and plenty of chances to receive feedback as shown in student L's interview excerpt:

> My group met three times before the final presentation. During the gatherings, we discussed and tried to reach mutually agreed upon decision on the main direction for the task and helped other members' work. (Student L, Interview)

As student L described, working in a group made it possible for them to generate and pool ideas together through discussion and planning while providing each other with immediate feedback (Shehadeh, 2011).

6 students (16%) also reported that group work made their task more approachable and manageable because they shared responsibility while helping one another; otherwise, writing and giving presentation could be potentially hard work. In accordance with this, 4 students (11%) indicated that they were able to decrease working time like with pair work,

but in a more organized way. Because there are more than four members who are in charge of their part, the process of completing the work took less time. For the final note, some students reported that they were able to get to know more about their members so their teamwork built up and it resulted in producing a better quality of work. Dobao (2012) also pointed out that when students work in groups, they have "more linguistic resources than pairs to co-construct a grammatical structure or utterance that is beyond their individual level of competence" (p. 51). In line with pair work, group work also seemed to enhance students' learning through interaction with other members as they exchange the role of expert and novice because they all have their own strengths and weakness (Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978).

(2) Difficulty in Making Decision, Slow Work and Lack of Teamwork and Cooperation

TABLE 7
Weak Points of Group Work on English Writing

Weakness	**# of students**
1. Feel difficulty reaching an agreement	10 (27%)
2. Take longer time to complete the writing due to different ideas	7 (19%)
3. Feel difficulty dividing work evenly among the members	7 (19%)
4. Require more teamwork and cooperation from all the members	6 (16%)
5. Feel more responsibility and burden	4 (11%)
6. Feel difficulty scheduling	3 (8%)
Total	37

Table 7 summarizes the reasons for the students to feel reservations about doing group work when working on English writing tasks. The predominant concern given by 10 students (27%) stemmed from too many voices involved in the decision-making process. Since individuals bring different opinions and ideas into the writing, it would be natural for them to experience difficulty reaching a consensus and it took more time for them to complete the work (7, 19%). Since there are more students involved, dividing work evenly among the members was another drawback of group work. 7 students (19%) thought that there were occasions in which one or two students had to work more than others. This might be the result of placing students with different levels of English proficiency in the same group (Kwon, 2014; Tai, 2015). Thus, how to team up students who have differing proficiency levels should be given more thought in advance.

Another issue to look at was concerning students' cooperation. 6 students (16%) commented that they perceived a problem regarding participation and involvement of all group members. It is natural to see that some students take a passive role while others are actively engaged in the task. Some students showed a tendency of being passive because there could be less opportunities for a student to actively participate so she/he decides to remain silent and become an observer (Dobao, 2012). However, without cooperation, there would be not enough learning to take place. Then, group work has no value in the L2 writing classroom because there is no negotiation. Thus, teachers have to make sure that every student participates in the task and contributes equally. Finally, while some students saw group work as an advantage to lessen their burden, others thought the other way around. Student K emphasized her overwhelming feeling regarding the deadline she had to meet and responsibility to take. This concern probably came from her language proficiency level and ability to participate with the rest of the group (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). Thus, teachers should pay extra attention when grouping students by mixing students with different levels appropriately.

Overall, group work afforded students the chance to share immediate feedback on language, content, and structure of their writing, and an opportunity of interacting and socializing with other students missing when they work alone. Also, joint responsibility over the creation of the target task would make students' burden less and build up the sense of cooperation. However, without cautious arrangements when grouping students, working in group could turn into a daunting experience for many students as well.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study explored how university students who took English composition class reacted toward different types of writing task they engaged in because their perspective could affect their writing performance. It also examined the students' view on different formations of student grouping for English writing because understanding of collaborative writing can benefit students' interaction with others while completing different writing tasks.

Referring to the first question of the study, the research found that 56% of students considered 'opinion' writing most difficult because they have to organize their ideas along with counter arguments and then explained them logically. Conversely, 59% of students selected 'narrative' writing the easiest one since this type of writing allowed them to write their stories and experiences just like how they would talk to someone. However, 13 students (35%) also reported that 'opinion' writing was the most enjoyable because even though they had difficulty writing argument and counter-argument paragraphs, they liked

the way opinion writing challenged and led them to compose a logical and opinionated piece of written work.

The second research question put forwarded in this study was to find out students' attitudes toward different formations of students when they worked on English writing tasks. While more than half of the students appreciated collaborative writing and perceived it positively to a great extent, many students still preferred to work autonomously. Even though many students felt that their final product created through pair and group work was better, many students commented that their actual English writing skill was more improved through individual work because they were able to focus more with efforts.

When it comes to pair work, 14 students (38%) considered pair work effect because they could share ideas and feedback with their partner. 7 students (19%) also showed their satisfaction with pair work because they could complete the task quicker and yet with higher quality of their written work (7, 19%). By contrast, 16 students (44%) expressed difficulty reaching a consensus when they tried to choose a topic or move toward the direction for their writing. 7 students (19%) also complained that their written work ended up quite different from what they originally intended to write. Overall, while the students working in pair were well aware of some positive effects of collaboration through sharing ideas and providing each other with immediate feedback, difficulty reaching an agreement and uncooperative attitudes from their partner could lead some students to prefer to work individually.

Strong points and shortcomings of group works were also asked about. 9 students (24%) stated that they considered their experience working in group valuable because they were able to observe and learn how other students approached the topic and create a good written work. 7 students (19%) noted that while pair work enabled them to share ideas and feedback, working in a group provided them with more diverse ideas and a plenty of chances to receive feedback. On the other hand, 10 students (27%) expressed their concern of working in groups because too many voices were involved in the decision-making process. All in all, group work provides students with the chance to share immediate feedback on language, content, and structure of their writing, and an opportunity of interacting and socializing with other students which was missing when they worked alone.

The findings have several implications in view of EFL pedagogy. First, it was found that while 'opinion' writing was one type of writing students felt most difficulty doing, it also played as a task that challenged them and elicited creativity and improvement in writing. Therefore, by providing a clear-cut process of how to write, opinion writing should be more often implemented in a variety of formations including individual, pair, and group work.

Second, overall findings of the study showed that many students preferred working alone to collaborative work. However, considering some positive effects it can bring into

EFL writing class, cooperative writing should be integrated with individual writing tasks. While implementing pair or group work, teachers should take extra precautions. McDonough (2004) stated that pair and group work could be useful or challenging for a teacher to implement depending on the situated context. When pairing or grouping students, teachers should take into consideration students' level of language proficiency, their ability and attitude toward collaborative work. In addition, teachers should prepare a variety of teaching methods in order to motivate students with different level of interest in English writing.

Biria and Jafari (2013) suggested that teachers should notice the usefulness of letting students help each other in improving their language knowledge, more specifically writing skills. Collaborative writing can be a useful pedagogical tool for both students and teachers because students can perceive it as a way to increase their confidence and sense of responsibility while enjoying writing and feel that it can contribute to their overall English ability. However, when implementing collaborative writing in the classroom, it should be introduced gradually from individual work to pair wok and then move on to the group work.

As with any research, this study has also some limitations. It should be noted that this study is a small scale study with a sample of 37 students. Thus, it would be difficult to generalize its findings. In order to claim that research findings represent the target group of the population, a larger group of students should be invited into the study. Along with this, only students' perspectives toward different types of writing and group formation were explored. However, if how their attitude affects their writing performance is examined, it would provide teachers justification for implementing collaborative work in EFL writing classes.

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