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A Content Analysis of Empirical Research on English Writing Using Korean Subjects*

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This paper provides a content analysis of research on English writing using Korean English learner subjects. The current analysis covered 238 articles published between January 1991 and September 2012. We identified nine content categories representing the foci of investigation: (1) writing process, (2) feedback, (3) instructional designs and methods, (4) assessment and testing, (5) materials/curriculums analysis, (6) integrated teaching, (7) rhetorical and textual patterns, (8) web-based writing, and (9) miscellaneous. Nine research design categories were also identified: (1) case study, (2) ethnography, (3) discourse analysis, (4) survey, (5) quantitative descriptive study, (6) quasi-experimental study, (7) corpus analysis, (8) content analysis, and (9) meta-analysis. Then we analyzed the number of studies published, samples investigated, and research designs used for each content category. The study results show that 43 studies were conducted during the period of 1991-2005 and 195 studies were published since 2006. The most frequently investigated population was college students while the least ones were professionals and graduate students. The most frequently used research designs were corpus analysis, quasi-experimental, discourse analysis, and case study. No longitudinal ethnography and meta-analysis studies were found. Based on the syntheses of research, we offer several implications and suggestions for future L2 writing research.

[content analysis/English writing/Korean English learners]

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, interest in teaching English writing has increased in Korea, reflecting the emergence of a global era which has made intercultural communication inevitable in a variety of vocational, academic contexts. The computer and Internet technology has accelerated the global exchange of commodity and information. The importance of intercultural communication has created a high demand on English writing ability for Korean English learners. With this globalization process, we observe that the number of studies researching English writing with Korean subjects has been on an increase as well.

Despite the research on English writing over the course of two decades since the 1990s, no substantive content review of research on English writing using Korean subjects has been conducted, to our knowledge. It is clearly a gap in research given a synthesis of past research yields a historical perspective as to how the field has grown and progressed (Yoon, Langrehr & Ong, 2011).

The present study aims to review and synthesize the studies on English writing with the main focus on Korean English learners during the past two decades. We analyze the articles according to a set theme, which includes the content of investigation, sample used, research method used, and year of publication. Through this analysis, our study will reveal the patterns and trends in the research of English writing using Korean subjects. This study will further identify the content areas investigated the most or the least, populations represented the most or the least, and research designs utilized the most or the least in the research on English writing with Korean subjects. This will provide a framework by which we can gauge the status and direction in the research of English writing for Korean learners of English.

This study does not tackle the importance or quality of each article. The serious appraisal of adequacy of hypotheses, research procedures, logical argumentation, and overall quality or importance for each article is necessary, yet it is beyond the scope of present study. Thus the scope of this study does not include an evaluation of what have been the main issues discussed so far, and what are still in debate or now agreed upon in each content area of research emerging from our data set. Such review will necessitate another or a series of research.

II. CONTENT ANALYSIS

The term, research synthesis, represents a systematic integration of an existing body of literature. Synthesizing research aims to draw generalizations from cumulative research studies and identify the limits of generalizations (Cooper & Hedges, 2009). It involves a

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critical analysis of a body of research studies. Through the process, it attempts to resolve conflicts in the outcomes of research and identify key issues for future research.

In acknowledging research synthesis as a scientific research process, Feldman (1971) claimed, "Systematically reviewing and integrating … the literature of a field may be considered a type of research in its own right – one using a characteristic set of research techniques and methods" (p. 86). Light and Smith (1971) also argued the importance of analyzing variations in outcomes among related research. They proposed what they called a cluster approach to a research synthesis, a systematic method of integration. According to Traveggia (1974), a research synthesis almost always involves the following six procedures: (a) selecting research, (b) retrieving, indexing, and coding information from studies, (c) analyzing comparability of findings, (d) accumulating comparable findings, (e) analyzing distributions of results, and (f) reporting of results.

Many other terms have been used in relation to the term, research synthesis. Meta-analysis, for example, is often used as a synonym for research synthesis; yet, in its more original meaning, it describes a set of statistical procedures to compare the results of quantitative studies. Content analysis, on the other hand, has been defined as a systematic technique for enabling us to sort through a large volume of documents and compress them into fewer content categories using explicit rules of coding (Stemler, 2001). Each procedure has its own attribute and procedure lending particular strengths. Content analysis can be a powerful tool to discover and describe the patterns and trends in documents.

As a few examples of content analysis research, Buboltz, Eemer, and Hoffmann (2010) conducted a content analysis of the research published in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* from the year of 1999 through 2009. The authors reviewed 514 articles and compressed them into 15 content categories. They also categorized the documents in terms of author, institutional affiliation, and other demographic characteristics. Through this analysis, they identified the principal areas of research activity and other characteristics in the research published in the journal, which suggested the direction and growth of the field. Yoon, Langrehr, and Ong (2011) performed a content analysis of empirical research that included acculturation and/or enculturation as a study variable(s) during the years of 1988 through 2009. They identified the patterns and trends of acculturation/enculturation research in terms of the conceptualization of acculturation/enculturation variable(s), research designs, content areas, changes in total publications and trends over time.

In the area of language teaching, only a handful of content analysis research has been found (e.g., Harris & O'Duibhir, 2011; Kim, 2010; Kleinsasser, 2013). Harris and O'Duibhir (2011) conducted content analysis in order to synthesize best evidence on effective language teaching out of the related research published during a period of 1980-2010. Through a systematic database search and coding process, the authors selected 13 key studies. Each of the studies is coded for the research design, language education

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context in which the investigation was conducted, and the strength of evidence. The study identified the five themes investigated in the key studies as influential factors for the effective language teaching and synthesized the research outcomes discussing the themes. Kleinsasser (2013) reviewed 79 studies on language teachers, language teacher education, and second or foreign language teaching published in the *Teaching and Teacher Education* since 1985. He analyzed the distributions of the 79 studies in terms of geographical region and article focus. Then he provided a detailed overview of 12 selected articles representing different geographical regions and international groups of scholars, as well as a range of research procedures used in the studies. Kim (2010) reviewed research articles on ELT materials published in Korea during the period of 2001-2010. He categorized the articles according to the source journal, content of investigation, and method used, and calculated the frequency of each category. Through this analysis, Kim summarized the trends in ELT materials published in Korea and identified the areas that awaited future research.

For the past two decades, a large volume of studies on English writing using Korean subjects have emerged across a wide range of research purposes and methods. An attempt to sort out those studies into a set of categories could contribute to synthesizing what we have known about English writing and further direct us to explore less investigated areas.

III. METHOD

1. Articles for Analysis

To ensure the focus of the study would remain on the issues pertaining to Korean English learners' writing, the studies using Korean samples – yet not the mixture of learners from different countries – were subjected to the current analysis. The period covered by the current analysis ranges from January 1991 to September 2012. Upon our preliminary analysis on the literature, there were not a substantial number of studies found in the area of English writing before the 1990s.

Primarily we searched through 12 leading journals in the area of English language teaching published in Korea and accredited by the Korea Research Foundation (KRF): *English Language and Literature Teaching, English Language Teaching, English Teaching, Foreign Languages Education, Journal of the Korea English Education Society, Korean Journal of Applied Linguistics, Modern English Education, Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning, Primary English Education, Secondary Education Research, STEM Journal,* and *Studies in English Education.* Then we expanded our search using the search engines including *Google Scholars* and *Kyobo Scholars*, and within the databases of *EBSCOHost*, *ERIC*, and *Riss4You*. The keywords used for search were the following

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words or their combinations: 'English', 'second language', 'Korean', 'writing', 'composition', 'instruction', 'process', 'writing behavior', 'writing patterns', 'feedback', and etc. In order to include the studies using Korean subjects yet published overseas, we also examined those well-known, overseas-based journals on second language teaching: *ELT Journal, English Language & Linguistics, International Journal of Lexicography, Language Learning, Language Testing, Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics, Journal of Second Language Writing*, and *Written Communication*. We believed it was critical to include them in the present content analysis since they also reflected the English writing of Koreans and thus offer a more accurate picture of the current trends of English writing research in Korea.

Initially over 300 articles were collected. Through reviews and discussions, we selected the studies that met the following criteria: (1) studies primarily classified into the area of composition and rhetoric, not those using writing as one of their data sources, (2) studies utilizing empirical research designs, including non-human subject studies (e.g., research syntheses, materials/curriculum analyses, or corpus analyses), and (3) studies using the samples drawn from Korean English learners, including the analyses of ELT materials and curriculums designed for Koreans and corpus analyses of Korean English learners' texts in reference to native English-speaking (NES) writers'. Hence we excluded research articles using the mixture of subjects from various countries even they include Koreans in their samples.

Out of data sorting process, a total of 238 studies were subjected to our analysis[1]. Among them, 224 articles were collected from the journals published in Korea, and 14 from the overseas-based sources of *ELT Journal, English Language & Linguistics, Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics, Journal of Second Language Writing, Language Learning & Technology, Texas Papers in Foreign Language Education* and *Written Communication*.

2. Content Categories

Content categories were determined through inductive procedures through a careful review of the articles collected. We developed an initial code book in which each article was coded in terms of the author, key words, research purpose(s), sample used, methods used, and main results. Based on the information from the initial code book, we identified nine content categories which represented the primary focal areas of investigation.

The content categories we identified are as follows:

(1) Writing Process: Examined the writer' behaviors, strategies, and thoughts which

[1] The list of the studies analyzed in this study can be found at http://www.hufs.ac.kr/user/gsee/.

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emerged during composition.

(2) Feedback: Examined the effects of various types of feedback on student writing.

(3) Instructional Designs and Methods: Examined the effects of a particular instructional approach, design, and task on student writing performance.

(4) Assessment and Testing: Examined the issues in the assessment of Koreans' English writing competence including rating criteria and procedure, performance assessment, and differences in native English-speaking (NES) and non-native English-speaking (NNES) judges' perceptions.

(5) Materials/Curriculums Analysis: Analyzed the text books, materials, or curriculums developed for Korean English education.

(6) Integrative Teaching: Examined the effects of integrative teaching based on reading-writing connection and/or speaking-writing connection.

(7) Rhetorical and Textual Patterns: Examined the rhetorical, structural, and linguistic features characterizing English texts by Korean writers.

(8) Web-Based Writing: Examined the issues in writing within web-based environments.

(9) Miscellaneous: Examined the topics which do not belong to any of the above categories.

3. Research Design Categories

After each article was placed in one or more content categories, the categories for research design were developed through deductive and inductive procedures. By employing both deductive and inductive procedures, we intended to develop a comprehensive system that not only recognizes the range of research designs possibly used in empirical composition studies but also reveals the quantitative distribution of research designs used in our collected articles.

As for the deductive procedure, we initially coded the articles using Lauer and Asher's (1988) research taxonomy: (a) case studies, (b) ethnographies, (c) sampling and surveys, (d) quantitative descriptive studies, (e) prediction and classification studies, (f) true experiment, (g) quasi-experiment, and (h) meta-analysis. Among the eight categories, we excluded (e) prediction and classification studies and (f) true experiment given that both types of studies are hardly expected in English education research or in more general social science research. While we were sorting and coding the studies, however, we realized that many of the studies do not belong to any of Lauer and Asher's research taxonomy. Through the inductive procedure, then, we carefully examined the methods described in each article, and added three more categories to the taxonomy: discourse analysis, corpus analysis, and content analysis.

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The finalized coding system for research design includes the following nine categories:

(1) Case Study: Sought a full, rich understanding of individuals situated in a real context or a possible generalization and identification of improved practices in L2 writing pedagogy.
(2) Ethnography: Described the activity of members of a particular social group, such as newcomers of a particular disciplinary community.
(3) Discourse Analysis: Examined the writing samples or other protocols in reference to cultural, vocational, and institutional context or genre of writing, usually by means of text analysis or discourse analysis techniques
(4) Survey: Sought information about the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of a particular group of writers usually by means of sampling techniques.
(5) Quantitative Descriptive Study: Analyzed interrelationships among variables influencing writing competence or effectiveness of pedagogical interventions.
(6) Quasi-Experimental Study: Examined the effect of a particular intervention on writing performance or compared the effects of two or more interventions, usually by means of group-comparison design.
(7) Corpus Analysis: Examined rhetorical/linguistic features in the writing by means of corpus analysis techniques
(8) Content Analysis: Examined textbooks and other written materials to identify a set of key contents.
(9) Meta-Analysis: Compared the results of quantitative studies using a set of statistical procedures.

4. Procedure

The classification process consisted of credit of 1 point to each article. For articles that clearly fit two categories, the credit was divided between the two categories (0.5 for each category). No article was sorted into more than two categories. Once we developed the categories through initial coding, reviews, and discussions, the co-authors coded each article independently. They reached agreement on 92.5 % of the sample for content category and 93.2% for research design coding. Any disagreement was resolved through discussion among the three authors. After each article was placed in one or more content categories and research design categories, the following methodological characteristics were coded using the Excel program: (a) year of publication, (b) sample used, and (c) data source.

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IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Number of Research by Content Category

Table 1 shows the distribution of studies published for every five year from January 1991 to September 2012 by content category. We used 5-year interval due to its effectiveness to present the increment of studies done during last two decades.

TABLE 1

Number of Research Published by Content Category: Jan. 1991 – Sept. 2012

Year	Content Category									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Jan.1991– 1995	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1996–2000	2.5	0	4	1	2	0	2	1.5	0	13
2001–2005	2	1.5	7.5	4	1	2	3	8	0	29
2006–2010	16.5	17	36.5	8	9.5	9.5	16.5	14.5	4	132
2011-Sept. 2012	7.5	11.5	21.5	3.5	1	3	5.5	7.5	2	63
Total	28.5	30	70.5	16.5	13.5	14.5	27	31.5	6	238

Note. 1=Writing Process; 2=Feedback; 3=Instructional Designs & Methods; 4=Assessment & Testing; 5=Materials/Curriculums Analyses; 6=Integrated Teaching; 7=Rhetorical & Textual Patterns; 8=Web-Based Writing; 9=Miscellaneous.

As shown in table 1, there are only a few studies in writing until the late 1990s. A small amount of research began to be developed exploring each content category from the beginning of 2000. Since 2006 the amount of research about writing has dramatically increased up to the present. The number of studies shown in this period has reached 195 compared to the 43 studies done during the period between 1991 and 2005. Considering the aspect of content, research was not diverse in the beginning of the 1990s. In the middle of the 1990s, research became more focused on broader content categories, especially since 2006 as the volume of research increased.

There was one study published during the period of 1991-1995 that introduced content category 3, *Instructional Designs and Methods*. Min (1993) examined the influence of writing assignments on the quality of college students' writing. Findings were that topics and prior knowledge have more significant impacts on students' writing performance than their linguistic proficiency levels. The period between 1996 and 2000 witnessed the burgeoning interest in research on English writing. We have found at least one and more studies for each of the six content categories except content 2, 6, and 9. Content 3, *Instructional Design and Methods*, was researched more than other categories. Yet, the number of studies belonging to this category remained small. After that time period the research in writing increased steadily, and as Internet services began spreading out in Korea, eliciting the excited response of people (Ju, 1994), web-based research appeared

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for the first time. Lee and Yoon (2000) investigated the effectiveness of e-mail writing. They identified various types of errors in e-mail writings through error analysis and suggested that grammar exercises on teachers' homepage were effective to prevent fossilization of students in most frequently made errors. Catching up with the emergence of Internet, Shin and Kwon (1998) compared the effectiveness of three different searching methods: a mailing list, the net news, and the web. To evaluate the improvement of students' writing under the different instructions, the participants were divided into three groups. Each group received one of the three instructions and the students' essays were compared. The researchers concluded that web searching is more effective to get information for writing than the other two methods.

In the period of 2001-2005, data shows an increase of three times the studies in writing research than before 2000. Interest in content category 3, *Instructional Designs and Methods* stayed the same. However, in content 4, *Assessment and Testing*, the research showed a noticeable increase. The studies in this category mainly concerned with interrater reliability in writing assessment and rater training. For example, Choi (2002) investigated the effects of rater training on the improvement of intra-rater reliability. She trained 26 in-service and pre-service English teachers for a week. They rated ten essays written by Korean EFL high school students three times. She analyzed their rating using FACETS to identify rater consistency and rater severity. Findings were that rating after training had affirmative effects on both rater consistency and severity. Kim and Lee (2005) looked into the task-based writing. They developed a set of test-items and rating criteria for task-based English writing and these tests were administered to 71 high school students. During this period, the research ratio on content category 8, *Web-Based Writing*, became surprisingly higher than before. Some studies explored the composition skill development through e-mail writing or key-pal activity. For example, Lee (2001) reported the positive effects that consistent e-mail writing had on the students' writing ability. Lee and Heo (2003) looked into the utility of a key-pal activity for developing to elementary school students' English writing. Kim (2005) examined the peer interaction through web-based writing. Participants were 28 students in the returnee programs of two elementary schools. The results showed that peer response within a web-based environment had more positive effects than traditional classroom environment.

Since the year 2006 to September 2012 not only has the number of studies for each content category increased but the foci of the investigation become more prominent. During this period (throughout the past two decades, in fact), content 1, *Writing Process*, content 2, *Feedback*, and content 3, *Instructional Designs and Methods* were the top three most frequently investigated areas. On the other hand, new emergence in research was observed for content 7, *Rhetorical and Textual Patterns*, which we will address later

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

in this section.

The most frequently studied category is content category 3, *Instructional Designs and Methods,* which has been researched extensively since the 1990s, compared to other categories. The studies in this category were mostly geared toward the development of more effective pedagogical interventions. Kim and Ma (2007) investigated the effectiveness of keeping English diaries on elementary students' writing ability and their motivation for writing.

The second most researched is content 2, *Feedback*. The majority of feedback studies introduced in this research examined the effects of various types of feedback on student writing performance, including feedback from teachers versus peers (in pairs and groups), and online versus offline. For example, Kang (2008) examined the effects of the three types of feedback: teacher feedback, peer review, self-review. The character and treatment of error corrections were also scrutinized in terms of whether they were direct or indirect. The results showed that all types of feedback helped students improve their writings through revision, but the degree of effectiveness of feedback differed across feedback type. Students benefited more from teacher and peer feedback, while self-review was the least effective. Hwang and Lee (2011) looked into the effects of different types of error-correction feedback: electronic feedback, conference and written feedback. The results from different types of feedback showed great improvement in the number of words produced. Furthermore, the teachers' feedback on errors had positive effects on students' revision.

The third most scrutinized, content 1, *Writing Process*, has shown that writing is not a product but a process. Researchers examined the writers' perception toward writing, the writers' strategies during writing, and their behaviors and thoughts which emerged while writing. Students' revisions also belong to this category even though the studies on student revisions are not many. Studies on the writing process began with two studies. Kim (1996) investigated the effects of writing via word processing on the editing and revising process. Later, Kim (2008) investigated the learners' writing strategies across different proficiency levels by utilizing a survey method. He divided 71 students into two proficiency-level groups. The finding was that two groups differed in the use of planning and revising strategies. Overall, the studies on writing process help us understand the thoughts and strategies that students employ, and offer pedagogical and classroom implications.

The newly emerging content of research during this period is content 7, *Rhetorical and Textual Patterns*, which examines the differences in linguistic features appearing in English writing between Korean students and native English-speaking writers, mostly utilizing corpus analysis techniques. The studies in this category have increased approximately four times since 2006. Among the 22 studies conducted between 2006 and

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September 2012, there were six studies on the use of corpus where there had been none previously. For example, Lee (2007) examined the use of connectors in Korean and Australian university students' essay writing using corpus. He found that Korean students overuse connectors in initial thematic position. Shin (2011) investigated Korean college students' overpassivization errors using learner corpus in the perspective that overpassivization can be remedied in the instruction process.

We came to an agreement in our research that another content category worth shedding some light on is content category 8, *Web-Based Writing*. There had not been any study conducted in this category until the year 2000. With the spread of Internet access, teachers started grafting multimedia and web use into the process of teaching and learning English. At the same time, researchers started not only examining the effects of instruction, assessment, and the processes of web-based writing but also grafting web use into previously studied areas without multimedia.

The launching of the leading journal, *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, contributed to this trend. Audience instruction using weblogs, teacher and peer feedback activity on e-board and collaborative writing on various types of Social Networking Services (SNS) are a few examples (Cho, 2009; Jo, 2001; Jung, 2011). In the late 2000s, especially after the year 2006, the amount of studies using web-based writing has doubled. During 2011 and September 2012, there have been eight studies published already. This trend will only intensify since National English Aptitude Test (NEAT) adopted Internet Based Test (IBT) and other various English tests as well. Furthermore, the Korean Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology announced that eBooks are going to be adopted in classrooms starting as of 2015, using the web in the language classroom will no longer be an option but mandatory for teachers to incorporate multimedia-based learning in the language classrooms.

There are four miscellaneous studies not included in the other content categories. For example, Park (2006) investigated how one Korean elementary school child acclimated to their ESL situation. She found that the participant's stable Korean literacy skills enable her to successfully achieve English literacy skills. Since most L2 learners' writing concept is apt to be structured in their L1 situation, the improvement of this kind of study might be interesting. Moreover, although miscellaneous studies cannot be categorized within the other eight categories, they are invaluable for English writing research.

The tendency of studies from 1991 to September 2012 is observed in nine categories. The most frequently investigated areas are content category 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8 besides content 9 (*Miscellaneous*), the least frequently investigated ones are content 5 and 6. Studies in writing drastically increased in the middle of the 2000s as shown in table 1. In particular, content 8, *Web-Based Writing*, sharply increased in the period of 2001 through 2005. As well content category 3 shows steep growth in the total number of studies during

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two decades. Content category 5 and 6 are less investigated even though both show the abrupt addition of research in 2006-2010. The uneven distribution of studied areas seems to reflect some factors such as the era, policy, interest, or curriculum in education.

2. Target Populations Investigated in Studies by Content Category

Table 2 shows the overall distribution of the target populations investigated in English writing research published between January 1991 and September 2012 by content category. In table 2, *primary and below* includes studies using the subjects from elementary students and younger aged children. *Secondary* contains middle school and high school students. *College* level consists of university students from various majors in writing classrooms and English major and general courses. *Graduate* level participants include students in a graduate program. *Professional* sample comprises of teachers, teachers in training, and professors from English majors and other disciplinary areas who frequently write in English academically and professionally. The non-human subject studies analyzing textbooks, materials, and curriculums were sorted out based on the designated target audiences of the materials. For example, if the study analyzed the writing activities in secondary English text books, it is sorted out into *Secondary* sample. *Miscellaneous* sample category includes the studies analyzing documents which cannot be related to any particular group of English learners.

TABLE 2

Research Samples by Content Category: Jan. 1991- Sept. 2012

Sample	Content Category									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Primary & below	5	1.5	16.5	1	1	2.5	2	4.5	1	35
Secondary	1	3	8.5	1	4	3.5	2	2	0	25
College	18	21	34.5	7	4	8	13	19	3	127.5
Graduate	3.5	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	9.5
Professional	1	0	5	6.5	0	0	0	1.5	2	16
Misc.	0	1.5	4	1	3.5	0.5	10	4.5	0	25
Total	28.5	30	70.5	16.5	13.5	14.5	27	31.5	6	238

Note. 1=Writing Process; 2=Feedback; 3=Instructional Designs & Methods; 4=Assessment & Testing; 5=Materials/Curriculums Analysis; 6=Integrated Teaching; 7=Rhetorical & Textual Patterns; 8=Web-Based Writing; 9=Miscellaneous.

From the most frequently investigated population to the least frequently investigated population are in the following order: (1) college students, (2) primary school and younger aged students, (3) secondary school students, (4) professional population, and (5) graduate school students.

The most frequently investigated population among Korean learners was college

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students (e.g., Baek, 2009; Cho, 2009; Chon, 2004; Han, 2009; Kim, 2011; Lee, 2008; Lee & Schallert, 2008a, 2008b; Min, 1993; Pae, 2008, 2011; Yu, 2008). This occurrence can be explained as the empirical study setting is relatively easy to set up for comparison group studies. For instructors and professors, the sampling is relatively convenient since they can investigate the effects of certain instructional methods with their own students whom they are currently teaching and meet on a regular basis. Hence, getting the empirical data from college students is possibly more convenient and easier compared to other population samples. This speculation is supported by the fact that the research using college students were skewed in the content-wise area since most studies have been investigating the effects of instructional interventions. This suggests that research with college students may need to address more diverse aspects of English writing to offer a broader insight into the teaching of English writing for the target population.

The second most frequently studied population is primary school students and younger aged students. This could also be due to the convenience of sampling for teachers. Among the studies using primary level students, the effectiveness of instructional approach and design was studied the most (e.g., Choi & Kim, 2010; Kim & Kim, 2012; Shim, 2007). As a runner-up, researchers probed more deeply into the process of writing development for this age group (e.g., Nam, 2011). There have been quite a few attempts to integrate teaching writing by connecting it to other areas of language functions and multimedia at this age level (e.g., Kim & Kan, 2009; Oh & Lee, 2007). However, there is only 1.5 research that investigated the effects of feedback on writing for this age level of students (Ko, 2010). The reason for the lack of feedback research among this age level seems related to the ways they are taught writing and grammar. Students at this age level are mostly implicitly taught, rather than explicitly, being engaged in diaries, storybooks, poetries, songs, and games (e.g., Kim & Im, 2009; Kim & Kim, 2012; Kim & Ma, 2007). Given that feedback should not be narrowly defined as grammar correction, however, the effects of various types of feedback to this age level need to be investigated compared to older student participants.

While the studies with primary students resulted in 2nd, secondary school sample studies ranked 4th. Most studies done at this age level were done to examine the effect of different instructional approaches, tasks and activities and to explore the effect of integrated reading-writing instruction. One of Bae's (2012) large scale studies was carried out with 595 middle school students to see the effectiveness of genre-based instruction. Another notable tendency with the studies of this age group is shown in content category 5, *Textbooks, Materials, and Curriculums*. The research which belongs to this category was to describe and classify the writing activities and exercises presented in the middle school and high school textbooks (e.g., Choi & Yu, 2010; Jwa, 2007). In summation, not much research using subjects from middle school and high school students was done compared

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to other age groups. It might be because at this level teachers are constrained strictly in school curriculum and time limited to meet certain curriculum requirements. Most daunting of all, the college entrance exam (KSAT) is likely to be eminent in their classroom objectives. Thus, these issues might not have been studied as much as with other student populations. Another speculation for not having much research at this age group might be due to ethical issues. In comparison group studies, teachers often have to divide students into two (or more) groups: a treatment group and a control group. For educators, it is hard to justify for their students to receive different treatment or instruction when they believe that one is superior to another.

The studies using professional participants came in 5th in the order of the most frequently studied samples, which means they are the second least researched sample population. In this category, researchers sought to see how the teachers and professors negotiate, behave, and use the target language in various writing contexts as professionals. Cho (2010) examined how Korean scholars write in the U. S. personally and professionally. She found that the Korean scholars do academic writing mainly in English and use Korean writing for personal purposes. The studies using this level of samples are comparing NES with NNES, or English teachers in service with those in training in terms of similar or different writing behaviors (e.g., Cheong, 2012; Choi, 2002; Kim, 2011). There are 16 studies investigated in content category 1, 3, 4, 8 and 9. We need more researching at this level as this could offer ideas about how the professionals write in English and teach writing in Korean EFL settings. Eventually, such research can help other teachers and professors reflect their own writing and teaching.

The least frequently studied sample population is graduate students. Only 9.5 studies were made in this sample category (e.g., Kim, 2011; Park, 2007). Even the content categories for these studies are limited to content 1, 2 and 3. The majority of studies with this age group are researched qualitatively. As a characteristic of qualitative studies, researchers focused on fewer students at this level. For example, Kim (2011) investigated the writing processes of six Korean graduate students. These students displayed multiplicity in terms of their representations of the writing process, their episodes, textural practices and concerns which were strongly related to sociocultural contexts. As shown in her study, graduate students were more likely candidates for investigating the phenomenon of the current state, such as writing process and behavior, rather than how much they can improve English using a particular composition instruction, since this level of population is considered more intellectual and to have already achieved a certain level of command in the target language, than college students and younger students. More research with this sample population group should be conducted in the near future since existing studies do not provide enough evidence and a full picture of how this level of student writes, thinks and behaves. With further research, teachers and professors can prepare and help students

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to more properly and effectively be better writers.

3. Research Designs Used in Studies by Content Category

Table 3 presents the distribution of research designs employed by English writing research published over last two decades by content category.

TABLE 3

Research Designs by Content Category: Jan. 1991– Sept. 2012

Methodology used	Content Category									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
Case Study	9.5	5	13.5	2	1.5	1	2.5	10.5	1	46.5
Ethnography	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Discourse Analysis	8.5	11.5	17	2.5	2.5	4.5	1	4	3	54.5
Survey	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Quantitative Descriptive	1.5	0	4	2	0	2.5	1	1	0	12
Quasi-Experimental	7	9	20	3	2	2	2.5	9	0	54.5
Corpus Analysis	2	4.5	15	7	3	4	20	7	2	64.5
Content Analysis	0	0	0	0	4.5	0.5	0	0	0	5
Meta-Analysis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	28.5	30	70.5	16.5	13.5	14.5	27	31.5	6	238

Note. 1=Writing Process; 2=Feedback; 3=Instructional Designs & Methods; 4=Assessment & Testing; 5=Materials/Curriculums Analysis; 6=Integrated Teaching; 7=Rhetorical & Textual Patterns; 8=Web-Based Writing; 9=Miscellaneous.

Among 238 papers analyzed, 102 studies are qualitative, and among them, 101 studies are divided into the following two categories, *Case Study* and *Discourse Analysis* while one study belongs to the category, *Content Analysis*. The studies which belong to *Case Study* utilized the data collection methods including think-aloud protocol, observation, interview, field notes and reflection. Out of 46.5 case studies, six studies solely employed think-aloud protocol without any other data sources (Bae, Song & Lee, 2012; Choi, 2011; Chon, 2007, 2009; Yi, 2008, 2009). The think-aloud technique still remains to this date as one of the best available options for looking into the writing process, cognitive process, and writing behavior. Yet, there are quite a few concerns regarding the technique such as its unnaturalness, possible distortion of a writer's thought process, and the impossibility of verbalizing every thought occurring in a writer's mind while writing (Perl, 1979; Smagorinsky, 1998). Hence, instead of using this technique as a sole data source, the think-aloud protocol should be combined with other data sources and data collection techniques for a more specific account of how Korean students write.

Fortunately, there are many studies in the case study category which used multiple sources of data as a triangulation process to depict a clearer understanding of students' writing behavior and their process (e.g., Ahn, 2012; Cho, 2010; Lee, 2004; Lee, 2009; Pae

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& Cho, 2007). The data collection period varies from one semester to two years (Kyu, 2000; Lee, 2001; Park, 2010a, 2010b). The number of participants differs from using one student to as many as 181 students (Cheon, 2012; Lee, 2006; Nam, 2011; Shin, 2009). Case studies most researched category is content 3, *Instructional Designs and Methods*. As one example, Yoon (2008) explored how six graduate students used a corpus concordance tool as a writing reference. She collected the data from various sources such as classroom observation, interviews, recall protocols, corpus search logs, classroom search assignments, and written reflections. She also explored how effective using corpus as an instructional method was inside the classroom. Other case studies focused on other content categories; the writing process came in as the second most studied, then showing the growing interest in technology web-based writing, then, feedback.

The other category, *Discourse Analysis*, includes studies analyzing a variety of writing samples, including students' writing, textbooks, diaries, interviews, e-mails, surveys, responses, group sessions, and etc. This category was added to previously existing classifications of Lauer and Asher (1988) after extensive examination of various research designs in writing studies published during the last 20 years. Over half of the qualitative research fit in this research design category. Although researchers qualitatively analyzed the various writings of students and related protocols, they did not attempt to scrutinize the writing samples statistically by any means (e.g., Chang, 2003; Jong, 2012). Kang (2010) analyzed the interview responses from two university and two graduate school students. Choe and Yu (2011) investigated the interactional details from a group peer feedback session among four university students. They qualitatively analyzed the discourse that had occurred during 40 minute sessions. Some research utilized mixed design approach as they explored students' writing both qualitatively and quantitatively (e.g., Cha, 2010; Chin, 2005; Chon, 2004; Kim, 2010; Kim, 2011; Kim & Park, 2012; Ko, 2009). More rigorous studies of this research design type should be continuously conducted with various levels of participants and educational settings in the future. Quantitative measures of discourse could provide possibly more generalizable information on the characteristics of certain levels of students' writing from different contexts.

Although *Ethnography* is one of the most representative qualitative research designs, no single study was found in the category. Park (2010b) examined how a Korean undergraduate student navigated his academic illiteracies. Since his research was conducted over 2 years, this was the closest study we found for an ethnographic research project. However, Park had been conducting his study longitudinally rather than ethnographically. The process of writing ethnography is not only time-consuming but also labor-intensive since the data collection and evaluation/analytical process is cyclical. To the best of our knowledge, we did not find any ethnography writing studies investigating Korean EFL writing contexts published during the last two decades. To expand our

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understanding about how various sociocultural variables influence the ways that Korean EFL writers negotiate the challenges and opportunities in writing in English, more research is needed in the ethnographical, longitudinal research framework.

Quantitative studies were mainly classified into four categories: (1) survey, (2) quantitative descriptive study, (3) quasi-experimental study, and (4) corpus analysis. The first category, *Surveys* finds out information about the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of writers usually by means of sampling technique. In this category, there is only one study using this research design among 136 quantitative studies. Kim and Park (2011) investigated students' reactions to writing activities. They collected data by conducting surveys, which include closed and open-ended questions. Closed questions were analyzed quantitatively to see students' (even tacit) understanding of writing activity. They attained that students who have positive attitude toward writing activities were more successful in learning the skill.

Quantitative descriptive studies is quantifying and analyzing interrelationship among variables. For instance, Park (2009) in content category 3 looked into the effects of rewriting on student compositions. Thirty college students were told to submit first draft and second draft without comment on first draft. Two evaluators analyzed students' writing based on scoring rubric weighing on format, content, organization, and grammar. Error analysis was performed based on syntactic and semantic errors at both word level and sentence level. Syntactic errors had the considerable relationship at both word level and sentence level. The results indicated that students showed the improvement on the second draft. Ji (2011) investigated whether or not summary tasks reflect writing ability rather than reading comprehension of Korean learners. She obtained the scores of the three tasks: summary, reading comprehension, and essay from 50 college students. The results showed that the essay scores were correlated with those of the summary tasks. However, they were less correlated with reading comprehension.

The latter two research designs, *Quasi-Experimental Study* and *Corpus Analysis*, are most frequently selected for data collection in quantitative studies. *Quasi-experimental* research is conducted where the groups are initially intact (i.e., not randomized), and the two or more different groups are pretested. The more sophisticated statistical methods must be used to establish the initial relative equality of the groups in order later to determine possible cause-and-effect relationships. For example, Baek (2009) examined the effectiveness of technology on the instruction of business letter writing by giving traditional instruction to the control group of 28 college students and technology-based instruction to 40 college students of the experimental group. The finding was that experimental group under web-based showed more improvement than control group. Jung and Yoon (2010) looked into how writing affects reading comprehension. They selected 87 Korean college students and divided them into two groups. They were participated in pre-

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and post-reading test and pre-writing test. The result showed that knowledge of writing tasks before reading compression had important effects to beginners' reading skills.

Out of 136 studies conducted quantitatively, 64.5 studies are allocated as corpus analysis, approximately half of all quantitative studies for 21 years. The reason for this might be the easiness of getting corpus for research. As corpus analysis is the main focus of the study, most of the papers were written in category 7. The studies analyzed the frequency and pattern of linguistic features appearing a set of writing samples. Kang (2010) examined the written narratives of 42 Korean college students and 28 American college students. He studied the linguistic features of the writings respectively. Hwang and Lee (2008) also investigated the difference between the writing of NNES and NES students. They used frequency analysis for corpus analysis and found that non-native speakers' writing is different from that of native speaker in the use of objectivity markers.

In the current study, *Content Analysis* is comprised of the studies that examined the patterns and trends in English textbooks, ELT materials, and curriculums. One study was more qualitatively oriented while four studies utilized quantifiable measures. For instance, Park (2005) qualitatively approached and analyzed the 7th national curriculum in terms of speaking and writing skills. Learning standards of these two skills of the current curriculum were examined against those of ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages). On the other hand, Choi and Yu (2010) conducted a quantitative content analysis of writing tasks in nine high school textbooks focusing on genre, rhetorical structure, task types and authenticity. They found that various types of genres were incorporated in the tasks, but very few opportunities were provided for students to acquire the characteristics of specific genres. More content analysis of textbooks, materials, and curriculums from various age groups, levels and settings are vastly needed in order to offer the best insight towards writing education. No meta-analysis research was found in our collected studies.

V. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

The data collected and the research done in this paper shows that there have been various studies conducted across different content categories, age groups and settings using different methods and creating research designs to improve and investigate students' writing and the writing instruction and curriculum used for Korean English learners.

First of all, we found that there were only a few studies in English writing until the late 1990s. A small amount of research began to be developed exploring each content category from the beginning of the year 2000. Forty three studies were done during the period between 1991 and 2005. Since the year 2006, the amount of research about English writing

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has considerably increased up to the present. The number of studies shown in this period has reached 195. From the middle of 1990s, it became more focused on broader content categories, especially since 2006 as the volume of research continuously increased. Second, we discover that from the most frequently investigated population to the least frequently investigated population are: (1) college students, (2) primary school and younger aged students, (3) secondary school students, (4) professional population, and (5) graduate school students. Last but not least, we found that among 238 papers we coded and analyzed, 102 studies are qualitative and 136 studies are quantitative. And the four most frequently used research designs were corpus analysis, quasi-experimental design, discourse analysis, and case study.

Our research has also shown how each type of research has interlocked with past and present research, shedding light or filling gaps where past or present research left categories wanting. During conducting this content analysis, we came to an agreement that there are whole fields of study yet to be researched and analyzed. First, among studies of content categories, while the most frequently investigated areas are content 1, 2, and 3, the least frequently investigated ones are content 5 and 6. The uneven distribution of studied content areas seems to reflect influence of various factors in English writing education. The small number of studies in content 5, *Materials/Curriculum Analysis*, may reflect the paucity of English writing materials and curriculums developed for diverse Korean English learner populations in various educational settings. To facilitate more research in content 6 *Integrated Teaching* may necessitate the development of theoretical models and hypotheses suggesting the possibilities of transferability from reading or speaking to writing or vice versa. More recently, web-based writing research has been significantly increased. At the same time, there has been a huge jump forward in writing education with sources such as multimedia and corpora. With the computerization, Internet and technology in language and writing classrooms, the research in this area has gapped a lot in the way of grafting writing instruction with continuously improving technology. Yet, they have not reached their full potential, especially, in writing classroom to assist different level of students. It should be continuously researched in the near future. Second, regarding the participants used in composition studies, over half of them were concentrated in college students. Therefore, more studies using other levels and age groups of sample population should be conducted in the future so that we can obtain various portraits of students from different settings and contexts. Third, in terms of research design, we did not find any longitudinal ethnographic studies done with Korean samples or meta-analyses synthesizing the studies about Koreans' English writing. These types of research should be carried out with the students of Korean EFL environments so that they can broaden our perspective and understanding of where our writing education stands right now and where we need to go from here. Finally, the study's limited scope does not include in-depth discussions of

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the studies found in each content category. Thus it does not account for what have been the issues of importance, and what are still in debate or now agreed upon in each content area. Future research may attempt to appraise the adequacy of hypotheses, research procedures, logical argumentations, and overall importance of the studies for each content area, and provide a focused review of selected key articles for each content area.

With so much change in today's writing education we find that the most important research should be started looking back to what has been done, so that, as they say, we learn from our past. As far as English writing education, there have been a lot of attempts and improvements made by quite a number of researchers and educators. This paper is the result of some of them in order that going forward we can improve our instructional ability and read the research trend. In our results we strived to provide the research trends and patterns of English writing across the years of publication, samples used, and methods used for each content category. At the same time, we presented several suggestions for the future studies on English writing and how different methods of research might be helpful in improving future English writing education in Korea.

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Examples in: English
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