

The effects of Padlet use on writing anxiety and strategy use in online English writing learning

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온라인 영어쓰기 학습에서 Padlet 활용이 쓰기 불안과 전략에 미치는 영향

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Abstract This study aims to examine how the use of Padlet, an online platform, affects students' English writing anxiety and English writing strategy in online college English writing classes. A total of 64 college students participated in the study and completed the survey including English writing anxiety, English writing strategy and demographic information. For the study, we divided participants into 2 groups, experimental group using Padlet for their writing tasks and control group using college e-learning during a semester. The results showed that students using Padlet used more writing strategies than the students using college e-learning platform. The use of Padlet, however, was not statistically significant on writing anxiety. English writing anxiety was differed by English level, but decreased at the end of semester regardless of English level. The results imply that Padlet is a useful online learning tool for English learners to actively use English writing strategies and even for learners with low English writing proficiency.

Key Words : Padlet, English writing strategy, English level, argument writing, College students

요 약 본 연구의 목적은 대학 온라인 영어쓰기수업에서 온라인 플랫폼, Padlet이 학생들의 영어쓰기 불안과 영어쓰기 전략에 어떻게 영향을 미치는지를 알아보는 데 있다. 총 64명의 대학생이 연구에 참여하였고 영어 불안감, 영어쓰기 전략, 그리고 배경질문을 포함한 설문 작성을 완료하였다. 본 연구를 위해서, 1학기동안 쓰기 과제를 위해 Padlet을 사용한 실험 그룹과 대학 이러닝 플랫폼을 사용한 통제 그룹으로 나누어 실험이 진행되었다. 본 연구의 결과로 Padlet을 사용한 학생들은 대학 e-learning 플랫폼을 사용한 학생보다 영어쓰기 전략을 더 많이 활용하는 것으로 나타났다. 하지만 Padlet 활용은 영어 쓰기 불안에 통계적으로 유의미한 영향을 미치지 않았다. 영어 쓰기 불안은 영어수준별의 차이를 보였지만 수준과 상관없이 학기말에는 쓰기 불안이 감소했다. 본 연구의 결론으로 Padlet은 학생들의 영어전략을 적극적으로 활용하는데 유용한 온라인 학습도구이며 특히 영어쓰기수준이 낮은 학생들에게도 도움을 줄 수 있다.

주제어 : Padlet, 영어 쓰기 전략, 영어수준, 논증적 글쓰기, 대학생

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1. Introduction

In foreign language learning, anxiety is a barrier to language learning. Especially, foreign language writing anxiety could negatively affect students' writing performance[1]. Spielberger defines that anxiety is the personal feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and concern related to the autonomic nervous system[2]. Research of speaking anxiety has been focused in second language learning. In writing anxiety, language learners with high language anxiety show a higher possibility to perform poorer and fail, but learners with low writing anxiety have bigger opportunities to be successful in language learning[3][4]. Kwon's study[5] about 100 university students in Seoul and Kyunggi province in Korea found that the students with lower writing anxiety performed better. For these reasons, writing anxiety has attracted attention from many educators and researchers.

Hartono and Maharani's study[6] found that grammar problems, vocabulary problems and insufficient writing practice were the most significant causes of writing anxiety.

In order to reduce writing anxiety, Jeon[7] suggested that the English teacher should promote student-centered learning environment and increase students' autonomy. Also, as effective ways to decrease writing anxiety she mentioned writing conferences and cooperative writing for language learners. In Jong' study[8] 37 Korean university students in different student formations (individual work, pair or group work) participated in writing tasks. As the findings showed, some strong points of group work is that students can learn from other members of how to write or other linguistic aspects including vocabulary and grammar and have a variety of ideas on a topic and receive feedback. However, as weak points of group work students had difficulty reaching an agreement and took longer to complete the writing due to different ideas.

In second language learning, complex writing processes which include brainstorming, multiple drafting, feedback, revision and final editing are important. Writing strategies are a set of conscious and specific actions or methods adopted by language learners to increase their writing efficiency[9]. Second language writers used various specific writing strategies and students at different proficiency levels used different writing strategies[10]. The skilled writer spent more time and were more concerned with ideas, revision, and edition of their writing tasks[11]. When students in groups or individuals perform their writing activities they may use different writing strategies.

Yu[12] indicated that Chinese college students utilize English writing strategies widely in English writing activities. Especially, metacognitive and cognitive strategies are the most frequently used strategies, whereas emotional strategies are the least used. However, gender difference was not statistically significant in the use of writing strategy, but there is a significant positive correlation between writing strategies and writing performance.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, educators have utilized and adapted educational online tools such as Padlet and current web 2.0 for their classes. Especially, Padlet is flexible as it is a reliable and suitable online platform for students and teachers[13]. Padlet's website explains that it can provide collaborative activities and a flexible environment to users[14]. Compared with other forum-based platforms, Padlet allows users to upload and share various resources such as pictures, links, video clips, texts, and more.

Affendi et al.[15] mentioned that Padlet helps students' vocabulary enhancement and builds new knowledge by making students give many writing opportunities. During brainstorming activities Padlet can promote students collaborative learning experience when they cooperate with other students. Also, the usage of

Padlet could provide a more authentic learning experience and learning motivation to students[16].

Class activities through Padlet offer a non-threatening space for collaborative classroom work and all students can contribute and learn from one another[16]. Students freely interact with other classmates on the topic and give comments about the peers' opinions. It may naturally affect their English writing anxiety. Padlet and current web 2.0 tools in the writing tasks provide collaboration and multiple interpretations in classes with reduced anxiety and stress[17]. Besides Padlet, mobile interactive application such as WeChat for college English writing fosters the students' team spirit, increases their initiative, improves their writing efficiency and develops their critical thinking[18].

To interact with students in the study group, Padlet as a discussion board was used to complete their writing tasks. The studies on the usage of Padlet in Korea has increased in the English education field, whereas research about the change of writing anxiety is scarce. In addition, few empirical studies have been conducted on Korean university students' English writing anxiety and writing strategy use and research on the differences of students' group or individual writing strategies.

The purpose of the study is to investigate how the use of online discussion board, Padlet affects college students' writing anxiety and writing strategies in online English writing classes.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

A total of participants was 64 students of D university located in Cheonan of Chungnam province. All participants were asked to complete the survey if they agreed to participate in this study. The participants who enrolled in College

English class II were grouped in two conditions. There were 34 and 30 freshman students who completed both surveys in each condition, respectively. 25 male and 39 female freshman students participated in this study and their age ranged from 20 to 24.

2.2 Measurements

2.2.1 English writing anxiety

To measure participants' English writing anxiety, we used Korean version of Cheng's[19] Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) translated by Kwon[20]. The SLWAI consists of a total of 22 items with 3 sub-components, somatic anxiety, avoidance behavior, and cognitive anxiety. Since our purpose was to measure overall English writing anxiety of students while learning online, we computed the total score by combining all 22 items. Participants were asked to response each item ranged from 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree) and thus, a total score ranged from 22 to 110 points. A higher total score of responses indicated higher English writing anxiety. To establish the internal reliability of the 22-item scale Cronbach's alpha was used and reliability coefficient was .963

2.2.2 English writing strategy

To measure participants' English writing strategy, we used the inventory that Kim[21] reconstructed items considered appropriate for Korean EFL college students based on Petrić and Czár[22]. Kim[21] selected 21 suitable items among 38 items with 3 sub-components, planning, while-writing, revising strategies, developed by Petrić and Czár[22]. One item from the planning strategies ("I look at the model text presented by the instructor before writing in English.") was not used in this study because the model text was not provided during the lectures. Since the students have developed English writing skills

through online discussions rather than learning each stages of writing step by step, we computed the total score by combining all 20 items. Participants were asked to response each item ranged from 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree) and a higher total score indicated higher English writing strategy. To establish the internal reliability of the 20-item scale Cronbach's alpha was used and reliability coefficient was .728.

2.2.3 Demographic Information

To gather demographic information of participants, the questionnaire included their gender, age, major and last 4 digits of student ID. We also asked participants to self-rate their English writing level from 1(low) to 3(high). Furthermore, to know experiences of participants related to English, we asked them whether they had taken English writing class or English exam before and had lived in a foreign country in the past. These questions other than demographic information were asked only one time at the beginning of the semester.

2.3 Procedure and Statistics

Due to COVID 19, all lectures in both conditions were conducted online by a same lecturer. During the semester, a total of 3 discussion topics were given for assignments and students had to submit their arguments for and against. Students in the experimental condition grouped to 10 and posted their arguments for and against on the board of web platform, Padlet, respectively. Their arguments were able to be read and freely commented on. Students in the control condition, however, submitted every assignment of their arguments for and against to the lecturer through college e-learning platform. The lecturer provided feedback on students assignment, such as punctuation and writing skills students learned. The survey of this study was conducted online at the beginning and at the

end of semester. We used Jamovi 1.2.27 for statistical analyses in this study and performed descriptive statistics and mixed-design analysis of variance.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive findings of the research variables are presented in Table 1. Among a total of 64 students, 34 first year students with an average age of 20.4(SD=.82) participated in the condition 1 and 30 first year students with an average age of 20.4(SD=.77) participated in the condition 2. There were 14(41.2%) male and 20(58.8%) female students in the experimental group, and 11(36.7%) male and 19(63.3%) female students in the control group. When students were asked to self-rate their writing level, 19(55.9%) in the experimental group rated it as low level and 15(44.1%) students rated it as moderate. Similarly, 14(46.7%) in the control group rated it as low level and 16(53.3%) rated it as moderate. None of students in both conditions self-rated the writing level as high. Since all participants were first year students, there were not many students who had taken writing class before. There were also not many students who had taken English exam before or lived in the foreign country in the past. The reason why proportion of experiences related to English was higher in the control group compared to the experimental group was because students who major humanities and foreign languages were included in the control group.

Table 1. Descriptive findings of variables

Variables	Sub scales	Group	
		exp.	control
Gender	Male	14(41.2%)	11(36.7%)
	Female	20(58.8%)	19(63.3%)

Major	Humanities & Foreign languages	0(0%)	12(40.0%)
	Social & Health sciences	14(41.2%)	1(3.3%)
	Sciences & Engineering	18(52.9%)	17(56.7%)
	Others	2(5.9%)	0(0%)
Self-rated writing level	Low	19(55.9%)	14(46.7%)
	Moderate	15(44.1%)	16(53.3%)
Writing class experience	Yes	8(23.5%)	11(36.7%)
	No	26(76.5%)	19(63.3%)
E exam experience	Yes	1(2.9%)	7(23.3%)
	No	33(97.1%)	23(76.7%)
Foreign living experience	Yes	2(5.9%)	5(16.7%)
	No	32(94.1%)	25(83.3%)

3.2 Mixed-design analysis of variance

To determine whether English writing anxiety would be decreased at the end of semester and differed by condition and self-rated English writing level, we performed mixed-design analysis of variance (ANOVA). English writing anxiety was a within-subjects factor and condition and English level were between-subjects factors. The main effect of condition was not statistically significant but the main effect of English writing anxiety ($F(1,60)=4.84, p=.032$) and the main effect of English level ($F(1,60)=29.73, p<.001$) were statistically significant. Any interaction of factors was not statistically significant. As shown in Figure 1, students who self-rated their writing level as low had higher English writing anxiety compared to those who rated it as moderate level regardless of the condition. English writing anxiety was decreased in total at the end of semester compared to the beginning of the semester.

We also performed mixed-design ANOVA to determine whether English writing strategy would be differed by condition and self-rated English writing level. English writing strategy was a within-subjects factor and condition and English level were between-subjects factors. Any main effect of each factor was not statistically significant.

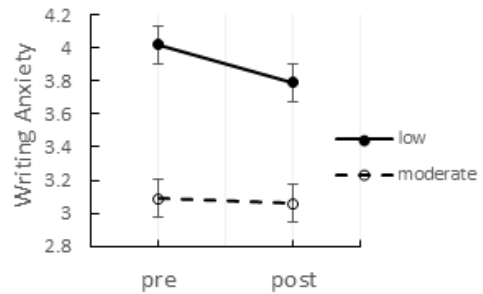


Fig. 1. Results of Mixed-design ANOVA (DV: English writing anxiety)

The interaction of English writing strategy and condition was statistically significant ($F(1,60)=4.92, p=.03$) and other interactions were not statistically significant. As shown in Figure 2, students in the experimental group increased English writing strategy, while students in the control group decreased English writing strategy at the end of the semester. In short, the use of Padlet was effective to gain English writing strategy regardless of self-rated English writing level.

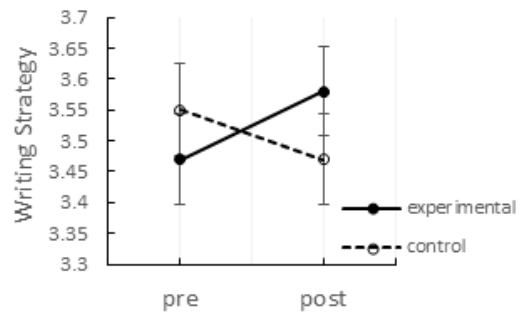


Fig. 2. Results of Mixed-design ANOVA (DV: English writing strategy)

4. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the change of college students' writing anxiety and writing strategies during online writing activities. In particular, the study was conducted in the

situations of different group formations and different online tools when they engage in English writing tasks.

The results we found in this study were as follows. First, students who self-rated their English writing level as low were more anxious about writing in English. It is not possible to determine the causal relationship between English writing level and English writing anxiety in this study. Online writing activities, however, reduced students' English writing anxiety regardless of their writing level. Second, online writing activities using Padlet were more effective in gaining English writing strategies regardless of writing level.

In the study some pedagogical implications are drawn from findings. First, the use of Padlet in English writing learning encourages students to participate in writing activities in online class. Students can become autonomous learners when they discuss at the same time. Sufficient writing practice can reduce students' writing anxiety[6]. The integration of Padlet has an advantage of pre-writing activities during writing class. Therefore, educators motivate students to develop their writing skill and improve language proficiency by using Padlet[15].

Second, low writing anxiety and the effective use of writing strategies help students' English writing performance[23]. Especially, for the low writing proficiency level students, educators make an effort to lower writing anxiety. English instructors' effective writing training and instruction is needed for students' better writing performance. Padlet can make an authentic environment for the students to allow to use their English without hesitation.

We suggest ideas for further investigation due to some limitations of this study. Since students who did use Padlet were allowed to write comments voluntarily unlike students who only submitted their assignments, the amount of writing may have been a bit higher. It is not

clear the reason of Padlet usage increased English writing strategies. Since the reason might be the amount of writing itself, cognitive process to give feedbacks, or others, it should be further investigated. Second, due to the lack of online test differentiation, we did not investigate the relationship among writing strategies, writing anxiety, and writing performance. Thus, it should be further investigated whether improved writing strategies and reduced writing anxiety actually result in higher writing performance. Third, the possible effects of the participants linguistic knowledge, grammar, writing skills were not considered. Possible alternative causes, therefore, should be eliminated in future.

In conclusion, this study implies that Padlet is a useful tool for learners to perform online English writing activities and even for learners with low grade of English writing level.

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