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The Effects of Task Types on English Writing Performance in SNS-based Learning Environments*

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of two different SNS-based tasks on university students' English writing performance. To address our primary research question, Me2day, microblogging and Social Networking Service, was employed. 43 university students were divided into two experimental groups depending on the task types: a comparison task group and a sharing personal experiences task group. The main findings of the study were as follows: first, two different types of SNS-based tasks, 'spot the differences' and 'writing diaries', had a positive effect on learners' writing performance. The reason for this was that the succinct messages limited to 150 characters made it easier for the students to try writing in English without burden; and they may benefit from their peers by seeing their posts and interacting with each other. Yet there were no significant differences between the two groups when it came to the degree of improvement. Second, two different types of SNS-based tasks differently fostered certain aspects of the writing performance; 'contents knowledge' was supported by the 'writing diaries' task and range was supported by the 'spot the differences' task. Third, learners in the two experimental groups mostly had positive impressions regarding usage of Me2day as a new learning tool.

[Social Networking Service/Me2day/task types/English writing performance]

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I. INTRODUCTION

The development of technology and the Internet has led to a rapid shift in lifestyle and social structure; furthermore it has transformed the literacy paradigm. Traditionally, the notion of literacy was confined to the ability to read and write (Crystal, 1987). Today, however, it encompasses sound, image, video and written text in various forms. Hence, a broader conception of literacy is required to address literacy related to multimedia technology (Tan, 2006). Present learners, as representatives of Digital Natives and the Net Generation, are growing up with digital technologies such as computers, mobile phones, the Internet, etc. Unlike learners in the past who merely absorbed knowledge created by others, learners today can produce and consume their own knowledge. To them, literacy activities involving the utilization of the Internet and multimedia are no longer an option but an integral part of their lives. Therefore, literacy pedagogy should provide learners today with a new concept of the literacy environment and help them utilize a various combination of media effectively.

The SNS (Social Networking Service), having recently acquired popularity as a new communication medium, is expected to play a pivotal role in creating a new literacy environment. It has been growing at an impressive pace in terms of the substantial number of users and the volume of messages that are circulated worldwide (Lee, 2011). SNS users not only create their own contents but also transfer, spread and deliver them to facilitate communication with other users. Through this process, the initial SNS users receive feedback from others and are naturally engaged in conversation. This results in users' interaction and relationship building (Lee & Jung, 2010). Although the SNS does not originate in educational sectors, it is analogous to social constructivism, which the English educational system of South Korea pursues in terms of facilitating individual participation, knowledge sharing, and cooperation (Lim, 2010). This implies that employing SNSs in educational contexts may be conducive to learning.

In fact, as new teaching and learning materials emerge, they create new contexts for language learning. In some respects, it has an advantage in that it broadens the realm of learning. However, it has to deviate from the omnipotence fallacy that a new technology can do the whole job magically on its own (Bax, 2003). Indeed, an understanding of the characteristics of learning tools has to be preceded; learning tasks and contents corresponding with the learning tools also should be under consideration. The task is to determine the success or failure of learning, not the features of the tool itself because interaction types and learning outcomes tend to vary depending on the contents, features, and structure of tasks (Hathorn & Ingram, 2002; Kim, 2008; Lee & Kwon, 2010; Smith, 2003).

This study was designed to address two research questions. Our primary interest was

to investigate the impact of two different task types on university students' writing performance in an SNS-based learning environment; thus we asked the following related questions:

1) How do different SNS-based tasks influence on university students' English writing performance?
2) How do learners perceive an SNS as a new learning tool for improving writing performance?

Ⅱ. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. The Use of the SNS in the Educational Context

As one of the Web 2.0 technologies, which value users' participation and knowledge sharing, an SNS is a web- and mobile-based service used to communicate and build relationships through an online network (Nam, 2010). As SNSs allow both synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication: mobile devices, web pages, instant messengers and computers (Antenos-Conforti, 2009; Borau, Ullrich, Feng & Shen, 2009), the range of pedagogical application is expected to be expanded. Particularly, its structure, which allows interconnected users to actively interact, supports the functional characteristics of constructivism with regard to cooperation, interaction, participation and communication (Lim, 2010). Furthermore, second language acquisition theory (Krashen, 1985; Long, 1983; Swain, 1985) advocates utilizing SNSs for instructional purposes. Within the context of second language acquisition (SLA), receiving comprehensible input and interactional feedback, being pushed to make changes in output, and negotiating for meaning are all helpful for second language learning (Ellis, 1997). In short, the learners provide written output when they make updates, receive comprehensible input when they read other learners' postings, and negotiate meaning by conversing/engaging in discourse with community members (Antenos-Conforti, 2009). Moreover, learners are able to increase their level of motivation for and participation in learning due to their exposure to authentic language. Complementary learning is also possible through involvement in cyber communities. However, despite the rapid diffusion and spread of the Internet and Web 2.0 technologies in South Korea, to date, few studies have investigated Web 2.0 technologies, especially SNSs, as educational tools (Do & Choi, 2010).

Borau, Ullrich, Feng and Shen (2009) and Kim and Lim (2010) reported that Twitter, one of the most popular types of SNSs, is an appropriate instructional tool for helping enhance English communication abilities and cultural knowledge aimed at Chinese

online university students and ESL learners in America, respectively. In addition, they claimed that it is conducive to a learning community in the shaping of motivation and positive attitudes. However, these two were case studies performed by discourse analysis, questionnaires and interviews, and just focused on the effectiveness of Twitter as a learning tool. What is more, they lacked in-depth analysis and quantitative evidence was not provided. Above all, their researches show limitations in that they did not relate pedagogical theories to the application of SNSs in language classrooms. In contrast, Antenos-Conforti (2009)'s study, which integrated Twitter into an Italian classroom, was built on computer-mediated interaction theory. It also adapted qualitative research methods to investigate the effectiveness of language experiences. By analyzing Twitter's multilateral aspects, she elicits more profound outcomes than the researchers of the two abovementioned studies. The following are among her findings: Twitter enhances university students' writing accuracy in terms of grammar and vocabulary. It also enables students to actively participate in learning and build learning confidence. However, this study also did not provide any empirical evidence to assess language proficiency.

Previous researches clearly highlight the potential of SNSs as teaching and learning materials. Yet, when it comes to designing a task, they have limits in that the characteristics of SNSs are merely under consideration, irrespective of the framework of educational theories. They did not show any empirical achievement and improvement in linguistic aspects, either. Motivated by these concerns, this study designed tasks which can be implemented in an SNS-based learning environment, and reviewed the value of SNSs from a pedagogical viewpoint.

2. Tasks

The definition of a task (Prabhu, 1987; Willis, 1996) in second language acquisition is very broad according to scholars and viewpoints. Prabhu (1987) defines a task as an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from the given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process. Willis (1996) states that a task is a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome. Taken together, it is said that a task is a communication activity that uses language for the purpose of achieving the intended learning aims. A task engages learners in frequent target language exposure and provides sufficient opportunities for language production. This leads to improving communication ability; thus, it plays a major role in maximizing language acquisition (Nunan, 1999; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Likewise, even learning and teaching methods as well as interaction patterns and quality of individual learning are affected by tasks (Buckner & Morss, 1999; Lee & Kwon, 2010). To integrate the advantages of task-based learning

into a curriculum effectively, task design should be the top priority. This is because the types of tasks determine the range and function of language and communication patterns (Nunan, 1999). It may be fair to say that the selection and designing of tasks reinforcing use of the target language is the determinant of success or failure in language acquisition.

Regarding task selection, tasks are classified in various ways depending on their contents, goals, and the kinds of interaction they require, to name a few (Hyun & Jeong, 2003; Kim, 2005; Hyun, 2010). This study was based on Willis (1996)'s task types. Willis (1996) generated six main types of tasks that could be adapted for use with almost any topic as follows: 1) listing 2) ordering and sorting 3) comparing 4) problem solving 5) sharing personal experiences and 6) creative tasks.

In order to investigate the way task design influences the writing performance of university students, this current research adopted two contrasting tasks: comparing and sharing personal experience tasks. Additionally, we structured tasks around Nunan (1999)'s five task components: goals, input data, activities, teacher role and learner role and settings.

Ⅲ. METHODS

1. Participants

43 university students: 18 males and 25 females, participated in this study. They all freshmen enrolled in 'English 1' classes at C University in Gyeong-gi province. This subject was offered to those students majoring in business administration as one of the general education courses and taught by Korean professors. The experiment was carried out for 9 weeks. Based on the results of the questionnaire completed at the onset of the experiment, the average time spent studying English reported by the learners was less than an hour a day (71%). Most of the participants did not study English writing at all (52%) and they were least confident in their English writing skill in comparison with three other English skills. None had ever used Me2day as a learning tool.

The participants, who belonged to two different classes, were divided into two experimental groups: one was group A (a comparison task group) and the other was group B (a sharing personal experiences task group) depending on the task types proposed by Willis (1996).

TABLE 1

Results of the Pre-test

Scoring		Group	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
analytic	content	A	20	2.62	0.741	1.206	0.235
		B	23	2.34	0.76		
	organization	A	20	2.65	0.796	1.113	0.272
		B	23	2.41	0.596		
	accuracy	A	20	2.6	0.699	0.943	0.354
		B	23	2.43	0.378		
	range	A	20	2.65	0.727	1.208	0.234
		B	23	2.41	0.557		
	mechanics	A	20	2.65	0.859	1.076	0.29
		B	23	2.41	0.514		
holistic	overall impression	A	20	2.6	0.718	0.281	0.78
		B	23	2.54	0.601		
total		A	20	15.77	4.241	1.095	0.282
		B	23	14.56	2.719		

($p<.05$)

To verify the homogeneity of each group, a pre-test was conducted before the main experiment. As Table 1 shows, an independent-sample t-test performed on pre-test scores revealed that there was no meaningful difference between the two groups at the beginning of the study.

2. Instruments

1) The Type of SNS Used

In the present study, Me2day, a microblog, was selected to provide learners with an SNS-based English learning environment. Me2day is a web- and mobile-based microblogging and social networking service in South Korea that allows users to post messages limited to 150 characters (Lim, 2009). It is very similar to Twitter. Now, more than 5 million people use this service (Choi, 2011). Below are the three key features that are appropriate for teaching and learning writing in class.

First, its interface is familiar to domestic users; this is especially true of the ‘replay’ and ‘tag’ features mostly used in blogs and web bulletin boards (Kim, 2010). Unlike Twitter, whose messages are listed in reverse chronological order in the timeline, it utilizes a web bulletin board, which means users can add comments to others’ original short message postings (Son & Kim, 2010). The settings and technologies that are

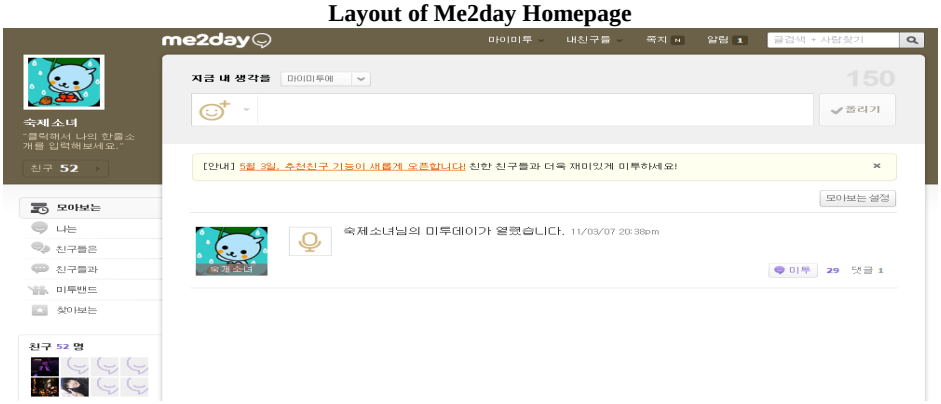
familiar to learners result in greater efficiency in helping reduce students' cognitive load (Hsu, Wang & Comac, 2008).

Second, it enables the creation of an online community, Me2Band. A group restricted to certain members chosen by the user can allow the instant exchange of messages using online and mobile platforms (Lim, 2009). In other words, via Me2band, students are encouraged to interact with each other and engage in authentic and collaborative learning.

Third, Me2day is a hybrid platform, that is, it allows easy access through many different channels, such as the web, smart phones and even cell phones (Kim, 2010). As a result, learners can track their performance anytime and anywhere. This can lead to an increased exposure to learning.

FIGURE 1

Layout of Me2day Homepage



2) Measurement and Scoring Rubrics

Each student's writing sample was assessed at the beginning and the last week of the experiment as a pre-test and a post-test, respectively. It involved guided writing and free writing. For the guided writing, the participants of the two groups were asked to create stories based on 4 sequences of pictures provided to them, while for the free writing, they were required to write essays about given topics.

To measure the participants' pre- and post-test writing, one holistic measure (overall impression) and five analytic measures (content knowledge, organization, accuracy, range and mechanics) were employed. According to Lee (2007), it is more plausible to adopt both rating measurements. Referring to the analytic rating scales of Brown and Bailey (1984), Anderson (1991) and Lee (2007), five measurements: organization (1-5points), content knowledge (1-5points), range (1-5points), accuracy (1-5points) and

mechanics (1-5points) were used. For the holistic rating, the TOEFL IBT Writing Rubric was employed. This rating system awards a single point based on the overall impression of a text, and the scale of the score range was also from 1 to 5. Instead of separately assessing the two writing tests, the guided writing and the free writing, we added up the scores of the two tests and arrived at a score on the basis of a 30-point scale. Thus, if the writing was flawless in all aspects, including the holistic and analytic rating measurements, the participant received 30 points.

Using the criteria above, writing samples were scored twice by two independent raters. One was the researcher and the other rater was a lecturer in English at C University who had received a Ph.D. degree. Prior to assessing students' writing, the raters went through a moderation process to ensure coherent and reliable scores between the two raters. If the total score difference was under 2 points, the mean of the two scores was used for analysis. Otherwise, if the total score difference was more than three points, then the rater pair assessed again. As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's α for all factors were all higher than .772, thus satisfying the general requirement of reliability for inter-rater reliability.

TABLE 2

Inter-rater Reliability of the pre-and post tests

Scoring		Cronbach's α			
		pre-test		post-test	
analytic	content	.822	.951	.826	.958
	organization	.842		.850	
	accuracy	.772		.788	
	range	.870		.833	
	mechanics	.829		.846	
holistic	overall impression	.846		.866	

3) Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used as an instrument to collect data for the participants' perception of the writing activities in an SNS-based learning environment and the usefulness of the SNS as a learning tool. The survey was performed each time before and after the main experiment. Prior to the SNS-based writing activities, a questionnaire asking questions about the participants' background information was administered. It was composed of 15 closed-ended questions asking personal information such as their perceptions of their English writing skills and their previous experiences with Me2day. Another questionnaire conducted after the experiment was composed of 26 questions, and utilized a 5-point Likert scale and open-ended items.

3. Design

As noted above, Willis (1996) generated six main types of tasks, and divided tasks into two categories: open tasks and closed tasks, according to the task structures and goals. Two tasks were employed in the current study. One task was a comparison task, which was one of the open tasks; the other was a sharing personal experiences task, which was one of the closed tasks. This was because they have salient differences in terms of whether information exchange or answers are required. In short, a comparison task involves specific answers and optional information exchange. On the other hand, in a sharing personal experiences task, no specific answers are expected but information exchange is required.

The participants were asked to leave at least two posts a week in Me2band of Me2day for 7 weeks. Experimental group A completed a 'spot the differences' activity as a comparison task, and experimental group B performed a 'writing diaries' activity as a sharing personal experiences task.

1) Task Design for Experimental Group A

As stated earlier, we structured a task for experimental group A around Nunan's five components of a task: goals, input data, activities, teacher role and learner role and settings. In specific, the final goal of this task was for participants to improve their writing performance. For this, they completed a 'spot the differences' task in me2band of me2day. The input data given to this group were others' comments and the teacher's feedback. The teacher mainly gave form-focused feedback, focusing on errors related to linguistic forms produced by the students, due to the feature of the task. The group members were expected to actively participate in this activity and interact with each other. The teacher not only functioned as a facilitator by providing input data and monitoring their performance but also took part in conversations with learners. For this activity, one-to-one communication was mostly used between the teacher and the students and the learners selectively communicated with each other when necessary. The set of pictures used in the 'spot the differences' task depicted nearly identical pictures characterized by 10~12 differences between the pictures. Experimental group A was instructed to find 3~4 differences between their pictures, and not to find the same differences that others had already found. This was because of the nature of closed tasks, the active interactions may not happen frequently compared to open tasks; thus, the participants were actively encouraged to read others' writing.

2) Task Design for Experimental Group B

We also structured a task for experimental group B around Nunan's five components of a task. The task goal, input data and settings were identical to those of experimental group A. In this task, students were given the task of 'writing diaries'. Put differently, they wrote about their own experiences. Although the roles of the teacher and students were also very similar with those of group A, differences existed in terms of the types of communication used. Many-to-many communication was used as well as one-to-one communication between the teacher and students. Experimental group B was instructed to write diary entries twice a week. They also could leave comments about the other members' posts (This was not a requirement). The teacher gave meaning-focused feedback, focusing on clarifying the meaning or the message they were trying to convey.

Ⅳ. FINDINGS

1. Students' writing performance

To investigate the effectiveness of English writing tasks in an SNS-based learning environment, a paired-sample t-test was performed to compare total mean scores between the pre- and post-data. The results are summarized in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Results of the Pre-and Post-Tests

Group	N		M	MD	SD	t	Sig.
A	20	pre	15.77	2.75	1.943	-6.329***	.000
		post	18.52				
B	23	pre	14.56	3.91	1.992	-9.419***	.000
		post	18.47				

MD= Mean Difference (p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001)

Overall, group B (the sharing personal experiences task group) showed slightly greater improvement than group A (the comparison task group); yet, the degree of improvement of each of the groups was statistically meaningful. The results indicated clearly that for both groups, writing performance was affected by the design of the task in an SNS-based learning environment. Based on the open-ended questionnaire conducted after the research, we reason that the succinct messages limited to 150 characters made it easier

for the students to try writing in English without burden; and this led to increasing students' interest in learning. Additionally, they may benefit from their peers by seeing their posts and interacting with each other. Finally, they could review what they had written whenever they wanted. In order to see if any changes had occurred between the two groups as a result of performing the two different writing tasks in an SNS-based learning environment, we conducted an independent-sample t-test. Table 4 summarizes the results; the outcomes of the two groups were statistically distinct from each other.

TABLE 4

Results of Writing Improvement

Group	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
A	20	18.52	3.434	.345	.732
B	23	18.47	2.100		

(p<.05)

In short, the results demonstrated that although both SNS-based tasks: 'spot the differences' and 'writing diaries', had a positive effect on students' writing performance in terms of total scores, significant differences were not found according to the task types. For a closer investigation of writing improvement, we examined the results of sub-criteria: holistic (overall impression) and analytic (content knowledge, organization, accuracy, range and mechanics) measurements.

TABLE 5

Results of the Pre-and Post-Tests Based on Analytic and Holistic Measurements

Scoring		Group	N	M	MD	SD	t	Sig.
analytic	content	A	20	pre 2.62 post 2.90	.275	.412	-2.979**	.008
		B	23	pre 2.34 post 3.30	.956	-.391	-.391***	.000
	organization	A	20	pre 2.65 post 3.10	.450	.394	-5.107***	.000
		B	23	pre 2.41 post 3.06	.652	-.391	-.391***	.000
	accuracy	A	20	pre 2.60 post 3.02	.425	.466	-4.072**	.001
		B	23	pre 2.43 post 2.82	.391	-.391	-.391**	.001

	range	A	20	Pre 2.65 post 3.37	.725	.525	-6.175***	.000
		B	23	pre 2.41 post 3.02	.391	-.391	-.391***	.000
	mechanics	A	20	pre 2.65 post 3.02	.375	.604	-2.775*	.012
		B	23	pre 2.41 post2.93	.391	-.391	-.391***	.000
holistic	overall impression	A	20	pre 2.60 post 3.10	.500	.561	-3.979**	.001
		B	23	pre 2.54 post 3.32	.391	-.391	-.391***	.000

MD= Mean Difference (p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001)

As can be seen in Table 5, both groups showed statistically meaningful improvement in all six subcategories. Group A showed the highest improvement in ‘range’, followed by ‘overall impression’, ‘organization’, ‘accuracy’, ‘mechanics’ and ‘knowledge content’, whereas group B achieved the highest improvement in ‘knowledge content’ followed by ‘organization’,

TABLE 6

Results of Writing Improvement Based on Analytic and Holistic Measurements

Scoring		Group	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
analytic	content	A	20	2.90	0.598	-2.333*	0.025
		B	23	3.30	0.538		
	organization	A	20	3.10	0.660	0.188	0.852
		B	23	3.06	0.549		
	accuracy	A	20	3.02	0.678	1.132	0.264
		B	23	2.82	0.467		
	range	A	20	3.37	0.625	2.078*	0.044
		B	23	3.02	0.488		
	mechanics	A	20	3.02	0.715	0.490	0.627
		B	23	2.93	0.434		
holistic	overall impression	A	20	3.10	0.575	-1.350	0.185
		B	23	3.32	0.513		

(* p<.05)

'overall impression', 'accuracy', 'range' and 'mechanics'. An independent-sample t-test was conducted to see whether any significant differences between the two groups existed in terms of sub-criteria.

As Table 6 shows, statistically meaningful differences existed in the categories of 'content knowledge' and 'range'. While group B (who had performed 'writing diaries') outperformed in 'content knowledge', which was related to the development of ideas and contents, group A (who had performed 'spot the differences') showed more improvement in 'range', which indicated lexical diversity and accuracy. Deduced from the results, the reason of the significant improvement of group B in 'content knowledge' is attributed to the fact that the task enabled them to express their feelings and opinions freely. Indeed, compared to group A, who had participated in a somewhat limited guided writing with given pictures, group B showed more diversity in sentence length and structure. They also had more opportunities to communicate with each other in various ways. When it comes to 'range', the learners in group A seemed to have benefited from being exposed to a wide range of vocabulary. They tried to come up with or look for appropriate vocabulary for the given pictures and use them in proper ways. In contrast, group B tended to use quite a limited number of words which they were familiar with when writing their diary entries. Form-focused feedback also seemed to contribute to achieve greater accuracy. In other words, 'content knowledge' was supported by the 'spot the differences' task and 'range' was supported by the 'writing diaries' task. This result agrees with those of previous studies (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Skehan, 1998) that state particular aspects of language can be fostered by different types of tasks, and it can be cautiously suggested that such difference in type of improvement due to different aspects can be achieved identically in an SNS-based learning environment. It also implies that using SNSs for pedagogical purposes can play an important role in individualizing learning depending on learners' needs.

2. Students' Perception of SNS-based Writing Tasks

The purpose of the questionnaire survey was to investigate the participants' perception of the writing activities in an SNS-based learning environment and the usefulness of SNS as a learning tool. The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 (strongly agree) represents the maximum score of the scale, and 1 (Strongly disagree) represents the minimum score. An open-ended questionnaire was also included.

TABLE 7

Result of Students' Perception of SNS-based Writing Tasks

Survey Questions	Group A			Group B		
	M	SD	P (%)	M	SD	P (%)
The learning experiences on Me2day helped to improve my writing performance.	3.85	.770	78	3.43	.589	35
The learning experiences on Me2day contributed to my learning English.	3.57	.755	57	3.52	.665	50
It was helpful to read other students' posts in terms of learning English.	3.35	.841	43	3.47	.665	55
It was helpful to read the teacher's posts in terms of learning English	4.21	.699	86	3.81	.588	75
Total	3.75	.596	61	3.56	.453	53.75

*P (%) = percentage of responses choosing 'agree' and 'strongly agree'

As revealed in Table 7, the mean score for each survey question was examined. Both group A (M=3.75, SD=.596) and group B (M=3.56, SD=.453) were highly satisfied with the SNS-based task activities. For a closer investigation of learners' responses, we examined the sub questions of the survey. One of the most noticeable results is regarding whether Me2day was helpful in terms of writing performance and overall learning English. With regard to group A, while 78% of the students reported that Me2day had helped improve their writing performance, as for the item 'The learning experiences on Me2day contributed to my learning English', only slightly more than half of the students (57%) responded positively. In contrast, 35% of the students in group B reported that Me2day had supported their writing performance, yet 50% of the students responded that Me2day had contributed to their learning English. To collect more detailed responses about these facts, we administered an open-ended questionnaire. As a result, we found that the types of feedback given to the two groups affected these responses. As stated earlier, group A got form-focused feedback and group received meaning-focused feedback because of the characteristics of the tasks. In this study, students preferred form-focused feedback to meaning-focused feedback because they had a strong tendency to check whether their sentences were grammatically correct or not. They also strongly believed that the teacher's direct error correction was related to the improvement of their writing performance. These kinds of students' perceptions were similarly found in Kim (2007)'s study, which studied about teacher's feedback on students' errors in writing. According to Kim (2007), learners expected and wanted their errors in writing to be corrected (78%), and the teacher's corrective feedback played an important role in enhancing writing proficiency (88%). For these reasons, group B, who had received

meaning-focused feedback, seemed to perceive that the writing activity in Me2day was less helpful compared to group A. In contrast, the reason group B reported that Me2day had contributed to their learning English was that they had to choose appropriate vocabulary to fit the context and occasion and apply them to sentences. In other words, lexical diversity made them perceive that Me2day was effective not only for their writing performance but also for other language aspects.

Ⅴ. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate the way task design in an SNS-based learning environment influences the writing performance of second-language learners and the learners' perception of the SNS as an instructional tool. To address our primary research question, two different tasks were employed: a comparison task and a sharing personal experiences task, which were generated by Willis (1996). On top of that, we structured these tasks around Nunan's five task components (goals, input data, activities, teacher role and learner role and settings). To provide learners with an SNS-based English learning environment, Me2day, a microblogging and social networking service, was selected. After designing the tasks, we divided 43 university students into two experimental groups depending on the task types: one was experimental group A (the comparison task group) and the other was experimental group B (the sharing personal experiences task group). Group A completed a 'spot the differences' task and group B performed a 'writing diaries' task in the Me2band of Me2day for 7 weeks. With respect to assessing the students' writing samples, one holistic measure (overall impression) and five analytic measures (content knowledge, organization, accuracy, range and mechanics) were employed. The main findings of the study were as follows: 1) two different types of SNS-based tasks, 'spot the differences' and 'writing diaries' tasks, had a positive effect on learners' writing performance; yet there were no significant differences between the two groups when it came to the degree of improvement. 2) Two different types of SNS-based tasks differently fostered certain aspects of the writing performance; 'contents knowledge' was supported by the 'writing diaries' task and range was supported by the 'spot the differences' task. 3) Learners in the two experimental groups mostly had positive impressions regarding usage of Me2day as a new learning tool.

The findings reported in this study are in line with those of previous studies (Antenos-Conforti, 2009; Borau, Ullrich, Feng & Shen, 2009; Kim & Lim, 2010) in that SNSs in an educational setting are effective in enhancing students' language proficiency and iliciting positive attitudes toward SNS as teaching and learning materials. Furthermore,

this research indicated that according to task types, certain aspects of language could be gained in different ways. However, this study results are limited by the small number of participants and limited study period; it is hard to generalize the findings.

SNSs in educational contexts have significant value in the sense that they enable individualized learning. That is, diverse tasks using SNSs which foster different language skills can contribute to supplement learners' poor performance when it comes to a specific language skill. Therefore, much more research will have to be undertaken to explore various meaningful ways of incorporating SNSs into language classrooms to correspond closely with pedagogical purposes and the curriculum. Especially, various combinations of tasks that allow students to reinforce all four language skills rather than restricting them to writing skills are highly recommended. In conclusion, SNSs have great potential for language learning, and they are expected to play a central role in the field of new literacy.

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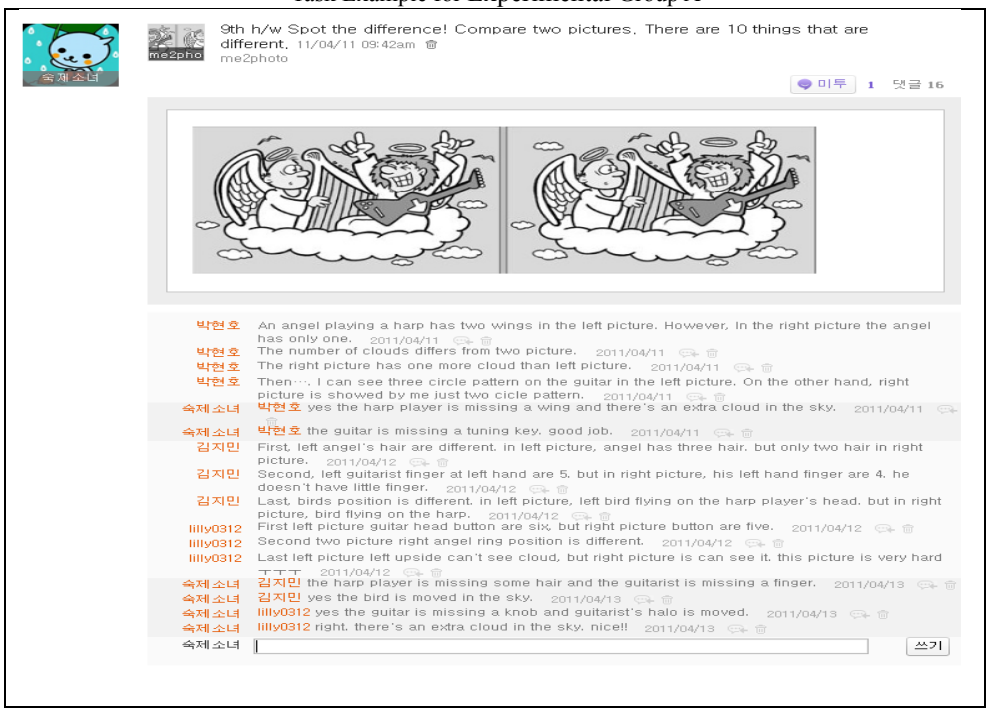
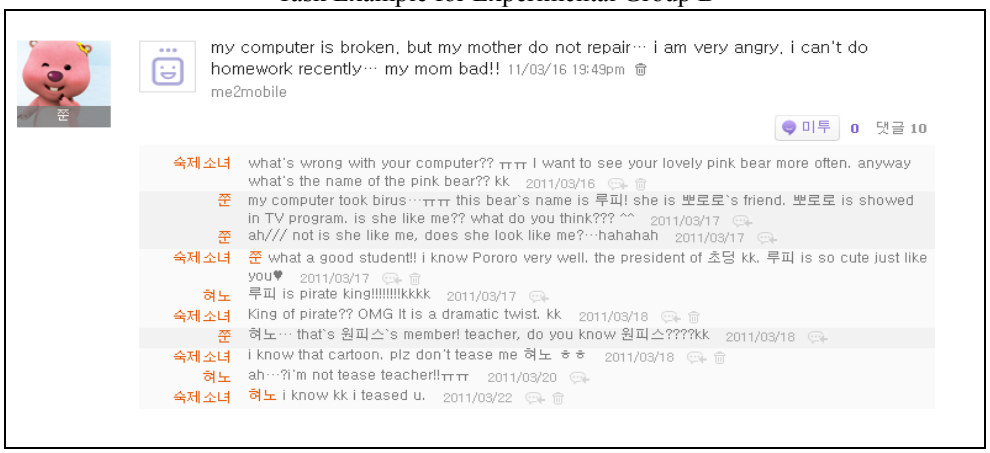
APPENDIX A

Task Example for Experimental Group A



APPENDIX B

Task Example for Experimental Group B



APPENDIX C

Analytic Scoring Rubric

Organization	
5	Highly organized; clear progression of ideas well linked; like educated native writer.
4	Some lack of organization; links could occasionally be clearer but communication not impairer.
3	Little or no attempt at connectivity, re-reading required for clarification of ideas.
2	Individual ideas may be clear, but very difficult to deduce connection between them.
1	Lack of organization so severe that communication is seriously impaired.

Content Knowledge	
5	Addresses the assigned topic; the ideas are concrete and thoroughly developed; no extraneous material; essay reflects thought
4	Essay addresses the issues but misses some points; ideas could be more fully developed; some extraneous material is present
3	Development of ideas not complete or essay is somewhat off the topic; paragraphs aren't divided exactly right.
2	Ideas incomplete; essay does not reflect careful thinking or was hurriedly written; inadequate effort in area of content
1	Essay is completely inadequate and does not reflect college-level work; no apparent effort to consider the topic carefully

Range	
5	Precise vocabulary usages; use of parallel structures; concise; register good
4	Attempts variety; good vocabulary; not wordy; register OK; style fairly concise
3	Some vocabulary misused; lacks awareness of register; may be too wordy
2	Poor expression of ideas; problems in vocabulary; lacks variety of structure
1	Inappropriate use of vocabulary; no concept of register or sentence variety

Accuracy	
5	Native-like fluency in English grammar; few(if any) noticeable errors grammar or word order
4	Advanced proficiency in English grammar; some grammar problems don't influence communication, although the reader is aware of them; no fragments or run-on sentences
3	Ideas are getting through to the reader, but grammar problems are apparent and have a negative effect on communication; run-on sentences or fragments present
2	Numerous serious grammar problems interfere with communication of the writer's ideas; grammar review of some areas clearly needed; difficult to read sentences
1	Severe grammar problems interfere greatly with the message; reader can't understand what the writer was trying to say; unintelligible sentence structure

Mechanics	
5	Few (if any) noticeable lapses in punctuation or spelling.

4	Occasional lapses in punctuation or spelling which do not, however, interfere with comprehension.
3	Frequent errors in spelling or punctuation; occasional re-reading necessary for full comprehension
2	Errors in spelling or punctuation so frequent that reader must often rely on own interpretation
1	Errors in spelling or punctuation so severe as to make comprehension virtually impossible

APPENDIX D

Holistic Scoring Rubric

score	Description
	An essay at this level largely accomplishes all of the following:
5	▪ effectively addresses the topic and tasks ▪ is well organized and well developed using appropriate explanations, exemplifications, and/or details ▪ displays unity, progression, and coherence ▪ displays consistent facility in the use of language, demonstrating syntactic variety, appropriate word choice, and idiomaticity, though it may have minor lexical or grammatical errors
4	▪ addresses the topic and task well, though some points many not be fully elaborated ▪ is generally well organized and developed, using appropriate and sufficient explanations, exemplifications, and/or details ▪ displays unity, progression, and coherence though it may contain occasional redundancy, digression, or unclear connections ▪ displays facility in the use of language, demonstrating syntactic variety and range of vocabulary, though it will probably have occasional noticeable errors in structure, work form, or use of idiomatic language that do not interfere with meaning
3	▪ addresses the topic and task using somewhat developed explanations, exemplifications, and/or details ▪ displays unity, progression, and coherence though connection of ideas may be occasionally obscured ▪ may demonstrate inconsistent facility in sentence formation and word choice that my result in lack of clarity and occasionally obscure meaning ▪ may display accurate but limited range of syntactic structures and vocabulary
2	▪ limited development in response to the topic and task ▪ inadequate organization or connection of ideas ▪ inappropriate or insufficient exemplifications, explanations, or details to support or illustrate generalizations in response to the task ▪ a noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms ▪ an accumulation of errors in sentence structure and/or usage
1	▪ serious disorganization or underdevelopment ▪ little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics, or questionable responsiveness to the task ▪ serious and frequent errors in sentence structure or usage

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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