

## Social Networking for Language Learning Participation in Relation to Task Value and L2 Writing Anxiety

Daniel Bailey (dbailey0566@gmail.com)  
Konkuk University Glocal Campus, Republic of Korea

### Abstract

Differences in student characteristics such as motivation and ability create high variations in writing performance for activities like Social Networking for Language Learning (SNLL). In order to address the need to increase SNLL participation among low participating students, this study first identified the relationships among task value, second language (L2) proficiency, writing anxiety (*i.e.*, cognitive and behavioral) and participation. Because L2 proficiency is a predictor of SNLL participation (Bailey, Park & Haji, 2017), this study also investigated the levels of task value and anxiety across high, medium and low SNLL participation groups when controlling for L2 proficiency. For a more holistic understanding, an adjective-description checklist compared positive and negative perceptions to SNLL held by high, medium and low participation groups. Seventy-eight South Korean university students were parsed into participation groups according to Facebook contributions over a six-week period. Findings revealed high participating students reported greater task value towards SNLL and less behavioral anxiety (*i.e.*, avoidance to writing in English) than lower participating ones. Cognitive anxiety did not vary across participation groups when controlling for L2 proficiency while behavioral anxiety and task value did, indicating writing apprehension related to mental anguish did not influence SNLL participation.

**Keywords:** Social Networking for Language Learning, Participation, L2 Writing Anxiety, Second Language Writing, Task Value

### Introduction

The emergence of new technology like Smartphones along with high-speed Internet access provides new opportunities for English language learners to practice communication through online social networking services (SNS). Participating in Social Networking for Language Learning (SNLL) programs entails students working together to produce a single final product that reflects the ideas and opinions of a group as a whole. The crux of SNLL participation involves the convergence and construction of shared meaning within online conversations among language learners (Palincsar & Herrenkohl, 2002). Collaboration through platforms like Facebook produces digitally stored discussions that students can update, archive, and share with others.

This study addresses a need to understand how task value and L2 writing anxiety relate to SNLL participation. Students may experience cognitive anxiety due to poor writing skills and behavioral anxiety due to fear of sharing their writing with others. Furthermore, this study contributes to empirical evidence by showing the association L2 writing anxiety has with SNLL participation, and in so doing, identifies steps instructors can take to facilitate greater participation among both

low and high performing L2 writers. For instance, instructors can scaffold low participating students through providing examples of accurate writing while challenging high participating students through competitive grading.

The first aim of the current study investigated the relationship that task value, L2 proficiency, and L2 writing anxiety have with SNLL participation. This is because high variation in SNLL participation (*e.g.*, word count, post/comment/reply count) is a common problem caused by differences in self-efficacy (Bailey, 2017), L2 writing anxiety (Bailey, Lee, Vorst, & Crosthwaite, 2017), and L2 proficiency (Bailey et al., 2017). Bailey et al. (2017) found that L2 proficiency predicted participation more than writing accuracy and therefore deemed important to control for when investigating the effects of task value and anxiety on SNLL participation. Therefore, this study also investigated how task value, cognitive anxiety and behavioral anxiety varied across high, medium, and low participation groups when controlling for L2 proficiency. Finally, student perceptions of the SNLL program were identified. To accomplish these research goals, the following questions were asked:

1. How do task value, L2 writing anxiety and L2 proficiency relate to Social Networking for Language Learning participation?
2. When controlling for L2 proficiency, what is the effect of task value and L2 writing anxiety on Social Networking for Language Learning participation?
3. How do high, medium and low participating students perceive SNLL?

## Review of Literature

SNLL participation occurs through communication commonly found on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and involves main posts, comments, and replies. Participation conventionally refers to a group of students working face-to-face; however, participation in this study refers to a group of students creating online content within a shared online space using the platform Facebook. Students work towards the common learning objective of increased writing ability (*e.g.*, accuracy and complexity) and interpersonal communication skills that occur when groups of students practice messaging each other through main posts, comments, and replies. No argument is being made here that Facebook is a superior platform to other social networking services, only that it met the criteria for the current study (*e.g.*, private class group settings). However, Mills (2011) provided reasoning for the use of Facebook by investigating how learners facilitate dialogues, participation, and relationships in SNS communities. The learning objective with Mill's students (2012) was to promote meaning focused discussion, creative exchanges, and language socialization made possible with Facebook interactions. Mills observed that "mutual engagement is a fundamental characteristic of a community of practice" (p. 353) and the basis of participation made possible in their course Facebook group entailed developing membership through shared discussion and mutual engagement.

### SNLL Task Value

Task value in the current study refers to benefits SNLL offers the development of language skills and pertains to what Eccles et al., (1983) refers to as utility task value, or in other words, the value

students hold towards an academic task that assists in achieving learning goals. Perceptions to task value are effective in promoting adaptive outcomes such as interest (Wigfield & Cambria, 2010), engagement (Raved & Assaraf, 2011), academic value (Hulleman, Godes, Hendricks, & Harackiewicz, 2010), and achievement outcomes (Bong, 2004). Students have varying levels of value concerning how SNLL activities help them with their learning goals and therefore considered an important predictor of an individual's motivation and achievement.

SNLL task value (and participation) varies according to the learner's predisposition to out-of-class SNS habits. For instance, Bailey et al. (2017) found that students who did not participate with SNS in their native language held less value towards SNLL than ones who regularly engaged with SNS on Facebook during their free time. Non-SNS users reported negative perceptions towards SNLL concerning sharing information with others, communicating with younger classmates, and not receiving corrective feedback. Here lies a challenge for instructors integrating SNLL in their curricula. To offshoot poor participation among students with low level of SNLL task value, Bailey et al. (2017) suggested allocating at least ten percent of the course grade to SNLL participation.

## **L2 Writing Anxiety**

Spielberger (2010) defines anxiety as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (p. 1). The current study defines L2 writing anxiety as a state anxiety subject to anxiety-provoking stimulus such as sharing L2 written composition with others. A number of studies have investigated methods that mitigate language anxiety because it is often referred to as the cause of low L2 proficiency (Horwitz, 2001; Jiang, 2015). Early research in foreign language classroom anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986) found a significant moderate negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and academic outcomes, indicating that students with lower levels of foreign language anxiety received higher grades than their higher anxious counterparts. While most studies correlated language anxiety with academic outcome (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Kim, 2006; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Pae, 2007; 2012; Saito & Samimy, 1996), there is a lack of research that investigates the relationship between L2 writing anxiety and collaborative online writing participation.

The current study separated second language writing anxiety into two subcomponents (*i.e.*, cognitive and behavioral) measured by Cheng's (2004) second language writing anxiety instrument (SLWAI). Cognitive anxiety refers to “the mental aspect of anxiety, including negative expectations, preoccupation with performance, and concern about others' perceptions” (Cheng, 2004, p. 316). Regarding L2 writing, this entails fear due to poor grammar skills, low vocabulary knowledge, and slow writing fluency. Defense strategies students exhibit in response to cognitive anxiety can result in tendencies to avoid L2 writing activities altogether. This procrastination, withdrawal, and/or avoidance of L2 writing accounts for the subcomponent that Cheng (2004) refers to as behavioral anxiety. Behavioral anxiety is considered to be more debilitating to achieving writing goals than cognitive anxiety because students who experience cognitive anxiety and still engage in writing are in essence overcoming their fears.

## **Methods**

This study identified the relationship task value, L2 proficiency and writing anxiety have with SNLL participation. Next, differences in task value and L2 writing anxiety among high, medium and low SNLL participation groups were identified when controlling for L2 proficiency. Data was triangulated through the use of an adjective-description checklist which collected perceptions to SNLL from high, medium and low participating students.

## Participants

Convenience sampling was used to recruit 94 second and third year South Korean university English majors. List-wise deletion of missing data due to incomplete surveys resulted in a final sample of 78 (48 females and 30 males). Participation was measured as the weighted average standardized scores of word count and turns taken (*i.e.* post/comment/reply count) by students on the class Facebook group. This participation measure follows similar steps taken in previous collaboration research (Bailey et al., 2017; Lange, Costley, & Han, 2016). Students were placed in high, medium, and low participation groups according to half a standard deviation of their participation score from the mean. In the end, 25 students were in the high participation group (*i.e.*, 0.5 *SD* above the mean), 30 in the medium, and 27 in the low (*i.e.*, 0.5 *SD* below the mean). Reasoning for separating participation into categorical groups was because it removed the outlier effect caused by a small percentage of students with high variance in participation which is common with SNLL (Bailey et al., 2017), and it allowed for analysis of open-ended data according to participation level.

## Materials

Cheng's (2004) SLWAI was administered to identify cognitive and behavioral components of L2 writing anxiety. A high reliability for the SLWAI has attracted a number of researchers to use it for studies that investigated L2 writing anxiety (Kurt & Atay, 2007; Noordin, 2012; Pae, 2007). Items were scored on a seven-point Likert scale with one indicating completely disagree and seven indicating completely agree concerning how the student perceived the statement in reference to their own anxiety beliefs. The SLWAI subcomponents revealed adequate Cronbach coefficients: cognitive ( $\alpha = .91$ ) and behavioral anxiety ( $\alpha = .84$ ). The six items for task value (*i.e.*, benefits of SNLL) were modified from Al Zumor, Refaai, Bader Eddin, and Aziz Al-Rahman's (2013) blended learning perceptions survey. Cronbach alpha for the task value scale was .912 indicating strong reliability. The survey was independently translated by two Korean experts in SLA translation studies. Differences in translations were discussed and resolved. A single item was used to collect information on self-rated proficiency (from 1 being low to 10 being high). Table 1 displays the items from the three scales.

**Table 1**  
*Task Value and Anxiety Survey Items*

|   | SNLL Task Value  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Facebook improves English communication among students     |
| 2 | Facebook is good for language learning                     |
| 3 | I think that using SNLL helps me improve my writing skills |
| 3 | I think that using SNLL helps me improve my grammar        |
| 4 | I think that using SNLL helps me improve my reading skills |

5 I think that using SNLL helps me improve my vocabulary

Cognitive Anxiety

- 6 While writing in English, I'm not nervous at all (R)  
 7 While writing English composition, I feel worried and uneasy if I know my writing will be evaluated.  
 8 I'm afraid I will make a grammar mistake in my English writing.  
 9 I don't worry that my English composition are a lot worse than others'. (R)  
 10 If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade.  
 11 I'm afraid other students would deride my English composition if they read it.  
 12 I'm afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample for discussion in class.  
 12 I usually feel comfortable and at ease when writing in English online. (R)

Behavioral Anxiety

- 13 I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions.  
 14 Whenever possible, I would use English to write compositions. (R)  
 15 I usually seek every possible chance to write English compositions outside of class. (R)  
 16 I often choose to write down my thoughts in English. (R)  
 17 I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions.  
 18 Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write compositions.  
 19 I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English.

An in-house developed adjective-description checklist was administered. It randomly presented 20 positive and 20 negative adjectives that could be used to describe perceptions towards SNLL participation. Examples of adjectives were “helpful”, “amusing”, “difficult”, and “complicated”. Students were asked to choose ten or more adjectives that reflected how they perceived SNLL and then write a short explanation (in either English or Korean) to describe why they chose that term.

The adjective-description checklist was used because it presented students with a balanced selection of terms to describe their opinions. Responses to adjective choice were separately analyzed among high, medium, and low participation groups to identify similarities and differences in learning beliefs and abilities regarding SNLL. Table 2 displays a sample of positive and negative adjectives as well as their accompanying responses as to why they were chosen. Checklist analysis entailed identifying responses as informative or uninformative with only informative responses being addressed in the open-ended analysis. Students were asked to provide informative responses to all their selections but approximately only half of the statements were considered by the researcher as being truly informative.

**Table 2**

*Example Responses from the Adjective-Description Checklist*

| Example Adj. | Informative Response (substantive)   | Uninformative Response (reflective)                  |
|--------------|--|--|
| Helpful      | <i>In particular, I try to make sentences using English through [the] Facebook activity. So, my English skills seem to have risen.</i> | <i>Making sentences is helpful.</i>                  |
| Easy         | <i>Writing simple sentences was easy.</i>  | <i>Doing online social communication is so easy.</i> |

|         |   |   |
|---------|---|---|
| Afraid  | <i>When I post something on my SNS, I am afraid that some errors are found in my posting.</i>                                     | <i>I am afraid to do online social communication.</i> |
| Awkward | <i>It is awkward communicating with someone who is not familiar with me. I am worried about if I offend them with my comment.</i> | <i>SNS is awkward.</i>                                |

---

### Procedure: SNLL Participation

During the first two weeks of the SNLL program, students were asked to complete an initial SNS writing tasks via Google Forms © that resembled actual SNS for language learning activities. (Table 3). The reason for having students complete the SNS writing task was 1) to reinforce the concept of social networking for language learning, 2) to assist students with questions they may have regarding the activity, 3) to scaffold poorly performing students through the SNLL process, and 4) to provide feedback of SNLL content that could be used on the class Facebook group.

#### Table 3

##### *Example of a Google Form © SNLL Writing Activity*

---

**Instructions for writing a Facebook main post:** Write a Main Post. A main post is a post that people make within an SN group (like Facebook). The following is an example of a main post about pets.

##### **Example main post: Student A**

*This winter I will go snowboarding. I love snowboarding because it is so exciting. My friends and I will spend three days and two nights at a ski resort...*

---

**Instructions for writing a Facebook comment:** Write a Facebook comment. A comment is a statement someone makes about a Main Post. Write a comment to the following main post. Comments are a good opportunity to ask questions. You can give your opinion on the main post and ask a follow-up question. Hopefully, we can have a great discussion.

##### **Example comment: Student B**

*Your winter plans sound terrific. I wish I could go snowboarding but I have to work all winter...*

---

**Instructions for writing a Facebook reply:** Write a Facebook reply. A reply is a statement somebody makes to a comment. Reply to the following comment. Pretend you are student A and reply to student B. Use your imagination.

##### **Example reply: Student A**

*Thanks for your advice. I think I will go hiking around the ski resort...*

---

The semester began with signing students up to the class Facebook group. Overall, the SNLL program was kept simple. In hopes that SNLL would be feasible for already busy instructors, little class time was intentionally dedicated to the activity. Students were expected to upload four or more main posts and eight or more comments/replies per week. Table 4 displays an example of a common Facebook discussion thread. Students were given updates on their participation on week three and five of the six week program so they knew where they ranked compared to one another.

Ten percent of the course grade was allocated to the activity in order to motivate more writing. The SNLL program followed steps taken in similar research (Bailey, 2017; Bailey et al., 2017).

Regarding the breakdown of participation, Facebook messages consisted of posts containing an average of 71 words ( $SD = 25.6$ ), and comments containing an average of 16 words ( $SD = 10$ ), with students overall writing an average of 904 words ( $SD = 825$ ). Each main post had an image attached even though students were not asked specifically to do so. This use of images provided students a conversational marker to reference in the main post and reinforced meaning to their discussion threads. Main posts were all substantive because they contained a main idea and supporting details while comments and replies were a combination of substantive and reflective statements. A reflective statement is being used here to refer to written utterances that reflect emotion or acknowledgement to a main post (or reply to a substantive comment), but no new information to the discussion. Both reflective and substantive contributions are considered active English language participation in that they conveyed written messages between at least two students. This is in contrast to sending *likes* or *emoticons* that do not directly entail producing new ideas in the L2.

**Table 4**

*Examples of a Facebook Discussion Thread*

---

**Main Post**

*Today, I went to E-mart with my mom because we had to prepare for Chuseok\*. The Market was crowded because the Chuseok rush. After shopping, we [were] absolutely exhausted because it took [such a] long time. Even though we were tired, it was a pleasant day. Please have a happy Chuseok!*

**Comment 1**      *Have a good Chuseok.*

**Reply**            *You to!*

**Comment 2**      *Wow . There are lots of people. It looks like a traffic jam. I just stayed in my dormitory during the holiday and studied English.*

---

Note. \*Chuseok is a national holiday in Korea to celebrate the harvest.

## Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS 24.0. Research question one was answered using correlation analysis and descriptive statistics. For research question two, MANCOVA was used to identify the effect of task value and L2 writing anxiety on SNLL participation while controlling for L2 proficiency. Finally, results from the adjective-description checklist were analyzed to reveal similarities and differences among high, medium low participation groups.

## Results and Discussion

Research question one identified the relationships among SNLL participation, task value, L2 proficiency, and cognitive and behavioral anxiety. Next, the study identified the different levels of task value and L2 writing anxiety across SNLL participation groups when controlling for L2 proficiency. Finally, analysis of an adjective-description checklist was administered to provide a more holistic understanding of how students at different participation groups perceived the SNLL program.

### Research Question One

The study begins answering research question one by exploring the relationships and mean scores of the variables measured. Pearson product correlation revealed a negative relationship between cognitive and behavioral anxiety with SNLL word count, task value and L2 proficiency (Table 5). Cognitive and behavioral anxiety shared the highest correlations with one another showing large effects sizes ( $r > .70$ ). Task value had the highest correlation with SNLL participation indicating positive perceptions to the SNLL activity was critical for active participation. Behavioral anxiety was the only anxiety subcomponent to show a statistically significant relationship with task value which was in the small effect size range ( $r = .20$  to  $.50$ ). L2 proficiency had the greatest negative correlation with the two anxiety subcomponents within the medium effect size range ( $r = .50$  to  $.70$ ) which is in accordance with previous L2 writing anxiety research (Cheng, 2002, 2004; Horwitz, 2010).

**Table 5**  
*Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables*

|              | 1      | 2      | 3     | 4       | 5       |
|--------------|--------|--------|-------|---------|---------|
| 1 SNLL Part. |        | .517** | .256* | -.326** | -.406** |
| 2 Task Value |        |        | .249* | -.126   | -.327** |
| 3 L2 Prof.   |        |        |       | -.566** | -.529** |
| 4 Cognitive  |        |        |       |         | .751**  |
| 5 Behavioral |        |        |       |         |         |
| Mean         | 904.00 | 4.55   | 20.32 | 4.36    | 3.99    |
| SD           | 825.00 | 1.39   | 4.21  | 1.27    | 1.21    |
| SE           | 93.412 | .157   | 0.480 | 0.143   | 0.137   |

A paired-samples *t*-test revealed that cognitive anxiety ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) was greater than behavioral anxiety ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) at a statistically significant level ( $t(77) = 3.703$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating characteristics such as fear of poor grammar, being evaluated, and not finishing writing on time were reported greater than avoidance behavior towards L2 writing.

Task value, L2 proficiency and SNLL participation had negative correlations with cognitive and behavioral anxiety which falls in line with extant literature (Horwitz, 2001; Pae, 2012; Sin, 2004). Task value showed the greatest difference among participation levels in that student who participated more held higher academic value for SNLL. The relationship between task value and performance in the context of SNLL fits within traditional learning and motivation theories (Pintrich & Schunk, 1995). As expected, higher participating students valued SNLL more than lower participating ones. Wolters and Pintrich (1998) recognized that students who value a task or subject are more likely to report deeper cognitive processing and more strategies to regulate their

learning behavior, and this added effort likely led to greater participation among students in the current study. Task values have also been recognized as a precursor to self-regulated learning and good learning characteristics in general, but not necessarily achievement. Findings in the current study, however, recognized that task value was strongly associated with achievement in the form of greater SNLL participation, which supports the notion that students should be encouraged to value SNLL prior to beginning such activities.

Participation with SNLL was negatively proportional to cognitive and behavioral writing anxiety, and this supports previous research (Cheng, 2002, Horwitz, 2001, 2010; Jiang, 2015 MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Overall, students with greater apprehension to L2 writing wrote less than their less anxious counterparts, however, as will be described when reviewing research question two, cognitive anxiety did not influence participation when controlling for L2 proficiency.

### Research Question Two

Research question two investigated the differences in task value, cognitive anxiety, and behavioral anxiety across high, medium, and low participation groups when controlling for L2 proficiency. Mean score comparison revealed that students overall found SNLL beneficial for language learning ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ) with an average of 904 words written on Facebook during the six week SNLL program. However, a large standard deviation of 825 was found for word count, indicating the presence of both active and passive users.

Large variation in SNLL participation allowed for the parsing of three distinct participation groups because the low participation group wrote three times less (228 words on average) than the medium participation group (621 words on average) who wrote three times less than the high participation group (1897 words on average). After parsing students, research question two explored the difference in task value and anxiety among the high, medium, and low participation groups (Table 6). As expected, students in the high participation group reported greater scores for task value and L2 proficiency while reporting lower scores for anxiety.

**Table 6**  
*Mean Score Study Variables for High, Medium, and Low Participation Groups*

|               | High (n=25) |           | Medium (n=28) |           | Low (n=25) |           |
|---------------|-------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
|               | <i>M</i>    | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>      | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>   | <i>SD</i> |
| Participation | 1897        | 715       | 621           | 250       | 228        | 72        |
| Task Value    | 5.40        | 1.18      | 4.69          | 1.16      | 3.55       | 1.18      |
| L2 Prof.      | 5.28        | 1.62      | 4.43          | 1.35      | 4.00       | 1.00      |
| Cognitive     | 3.87        | 1.38      | 4.39          | 1.07      | 4.80       | 1.22      |
| Behavioral    | 3.29        | 1.21      | 4.06          | 1.03      | 4.61       | 1.06      |

Note. L2 prof (1-10); Task Value, Cognitive and Behavioral Anxiety (1-7)

A One-Way MANCOVA analysis was administered to identify statistically significant differences between the participation groups with L2 proficiency as the covariant (Table 7). Data was normally distributed with no outliers. The MANCOVA eliminates the covariates' effects on the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variables. This was necessary here because L2 proficiency has shown to greatly influence SNLL participation (Bailey et al., 2017). MANCOVA found differences between high, medium, and low participation groups for task value and

behavioral anxiety, but not for cognitive anxiety. A post-hoc test was used to identify where the statistically significant mean differences existed.

**Table 7**  
*MANCOVA Table for High, Medium, and Low Participation Groups*

| Source     | Sum of Squares | <i>df</i> | Mean Square | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|----------|----------|
| Task Value | 36.09          | 2         | 18.044      | 12.878   | .000     |
| Cognitive  | 1.158          | 2         | 0.579       | 0.517    | .598     |
| Behavioral | 8.184          | 2         | 4.092       | 4.157    | .019     |

Table 8 shows the statistically significant results from pairwise comparison. SNLL task value reveals the greatest difference between high and low participation groups, indicating value towards SNLL as a language-learning tool influenced participation more than anxiety towards L2 writing. When including L2 proficiency as a covariant, behavioral anxiety revealed a statistically significant relationship among the participation groups while cognitive anxiety did not, indicating that actual intentions to write in the L2 are more predictive of participation than mental anxiety to writing. As expected, differences between high and low participation groups were greater than differences with high and medium and medium and low participation groups.

**Table 8**  
*Post-Hoc Pairwise Analysis of MANCOVA*

|                    | <i>Adjusted MD</i> | <i>SE</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
| Task Value         |                    |           |          |
| High-Low           | 1.79               | .335      | .000**   |
| Med-Low            | 1.13               | .329      | .001**   |
| Cognitive Anxiety  |                    |           |          |
| High-Low           | .319               | .321      | .329     |
| Behavioral Anxiety |                    |           |          |
| High-Low           | .868               | .301      | .005**   |

Note: alpha .05\*, alpha .01\*\* Comparisons with significance levels below .05 were omitted.

Findings from answering research question two recognized greater task value among the high participation group followed by the medium and then low participation groups. Positive task value among high participating students falls in line with previous studies (Bosch, 2009; Bowman & Akcaoglu, 2014; Blyth, 2015; Eren, 2012). Klimanova and Dembovskaaya (2013), Mills (2011), and Mitchell (2012) attributed positive task value with SNLL among their students to increased opportunity to use the target language in countries where the language being studied was not commonly spoken, and this may likely be true for the participants in the current study because South Korean students rarely have opportunity to use English outside the classroom.

When adding L2 proficiency as a covariant, cognitive anxiety did not show a statistically significant difference among participation groups, while on the other hand both task value and behavioral anxiety did differ among groups at statistically significant levels. This finding is important because it reveals a student's willingness to participate in collaborative writing activities like SNLL depends less on their apprehension to writing and more on their value and behavior to approach L2 writing.

Behavioral anxiety did vary across high, medium, and low participation groups and this makes sense since items on the behavioral anxiety scale reference students' tendencies to write in the target language. The positively worded items from the behavioral scale such as "I often choose to write down my thoughts in English" and "I seek every possible chance to write composition outside of class" would resonate directly to those students who participated most often with SNLL.

The behavioral subcomponent of the SLWAI was recognized in the current study as less a measure of anxiety and more a measure of an individual's propensity to engage in the target language. Cognitive anxiety items such as "I feel anxious when writing in a second language" are unmistakably related to the cognitive element of L2 writing anxiety while behavioral anxiety items such as "I avoid writing in English" may have just as much to do with low L2 proficiency as with high L2 writing anxiety.

The achievement of high SNLL participation represented a propensity to seek success and avoid failure which Elliot (1999) refers to as performance-approach goal orientation. It is considered here that students in the high participation group held approach-performance goal orientations (Elliot & McGregor, 1999) and excelled at communicating with others through SNLL, while those with avoidance-performance goal orientations performed poorly. Elliot and McGregor (1999) investigated mediating effects of state anxiety emanating from test-taking and cognitive anxiety and found that performance-avoidance goal orientation negatively predicted academic achievement which may be the case here. While parallels are not exact with the current study, predisposition to approach or avoid learning tasks resulted in similar participation outcomes.

Results from answering research question one and two show that task value and anxiety vary among low, medium, and high participation groups. This study next attempted to explain these results through the students' own descriptions of the SNLL program.

### **Research Question Three**

Research question three identified similarities and differences in positive and negative perceptions towards SNLL participation among high, medium, and low participation groups. The total number of selections for a given adjective were divided by the number of participants in the given group which provided percentages of adjective choice across groups (Table 8). Overall negative adjective choice ( $M = .240$ ,  $SD = .209$ ) was greater than positive adjective choice ( $M = .197$ ,  $SD = .170$ ), but paired samples *t*-test showed the difference was not significant. While positive adjective choice was associated with both high and low participating students, negative adjective choice was associated with low and medium participating ones which supports the negative relationship between participation and L2 writing anxiety identified in research question one.

Percent range of adjective choice was either low because it fell below one standard deviation from the mean (*i.e.*, 0-20 percent), medium because it fell within one standard deviation from the mean (*i.e.*, 20-35 percent), or high because it fell one standard deviation above the mean (35 percent or more). Adjectives were not analyzed on their own if all groups fell into the low percentage range.

**Table 8**  
*Percent Adjective Choice for Describing SNLL Participation*

| Positive    | High<br>(n=20*) | Medium<br>(n=24*) | Low<br>(n=18*) | Negative    | High | Medium | Low |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------|------|--------|-----|
| Academic    | 35%             | 39%               | 19%            | Afraid      | 26%  | 61%    | 63% |
| Amusing     | 48%             | 50%               | 38%            | Alienated   | 9%   | 28%    | 13% |
| Comfortable | 26%             | 50%               | 13%            | Anxious     | 35%  | 22%    | 56% |
| Cooperative | 13%             | 22%               | 0%             | Ashamed     | 9%   | 44%    | 50% |
| Creative    | 39%             | 44%               | 6%             | Awkward     | 26%  | 56%    | 56% |
| Easy        | 13%             | 39%               | 6%             | Cautious    | 30%  | 56%    | 50% |
| Good        | 30%             | 44%               | 25%            | Complicated | 9%   | 39%    | 50% |
| Happy       | 9%              | 22%               | 6%             | Confused    | 13%  | 17%    | 56% |
| Helpful     | 70%             | 56%               | 44%            | Difficult   | 35%  | 61%    | 94% |
| Interesting | 30%             | 17%               | 25%            | Embarrassed | 4%   | 6%     | 38% |
| Rewarding   | 26%             | 17%               | 19%            | Fearful     | 9%   | 17%    | 25% |
| Simple      | 22%             | 17%               | 13%            |             |      |        |     |
| Valuable    | 35%             | 33%               | 13%            |             |      |        |     |
| Average     | 23%             | 23%               | 13%            | Average     | 13%  | 26%    | 32% |

Note. \*Not all students completed the adjective-description checklist due to high absenteeism. The adjectives excited, fun, impressive, incredible, intelligent, playful, useful, foolish, lonely, nervous, frightening, impossible, lazy, imperfect, pointless, and shameful were in the low participation range for all groups and therefore not added to the table.

### Positive Perceptions toward SNLL

Two themes recognized throughout the positive responses towards SNLL were benefits to communication and benefits to English skills. Phrases associated with benefits to communication included 1) sharing ideas/stories, 2) posting/commenting with others, 3) meeting people, 4) and socializing with others. Approximately half the benefits to language skill development were related to writing skills while the other half were attributed to elements of writing such as grammar, vocabulary, or English skills in general (*e.g.*, Using Facebook was good for my English skills).

Both the adjectives ‘amusing’ and “helpful” fell within the high reported percent range for the three participation groups with “helpful” being the highest reported positive adjective selected. The reasoning given by both the high and medium participation groups for choosing “helpful” was benefits to English learning with respect to writing (n=7), grammar/vocabulary (n=8) skill development, and communication (n=3). Less description was given by the low participation group with two students attributing helpfulness to English skills and two to communication.

Adjectives reported in the high percent range by the high and medium participation groups included “academic”, “comfortable”, and “creative”. With respect to “academic”, students in the high participation group attributed this choice to developing communication skills (n=3) while students in the medium participation group attributed reasoning to both benefits to communication (n=2) as well as writing skill development (n=2). Regarding the adjective “comfortable”, students in the high participation group provided similar reasoning which was comfort at using the Facebook platform (n=4). On the other hand, students in the medium participation group had multiple reasons for selecting “comfortable” which included comfort with the Facebook system (n=2), sharing content (n=3), storytelling (n=1), writing (n=1), and meeting people (n=1).

The adjective “creative” revealed the starkest difference among groups with both the medium and high participation group reporting in the high percentage range while no student from the low participation group selected it. Consensus between the high and medium group for selecting this adjective was also high with students in both groups attributing benefits to writing, specifically creative writing (n=8) and creative writing instruction (n=2), as the reason for selecting this adjective, indicating SNLL was a creative outlet for the L2 writers in the current study.

Other noteworthy patterns for positive adjectives worth discussing separately are “easy” and “good”. With regards to “easy”, only students in the medium participation group reported it in the high percentage range. Perhaps if they had participated more it would not have seemed as easy. Students in the high and medium group stated communication aspects associated with SNLL (n=8) as the reasoning for choosing “easy” as the adjective to explain their feeling towards the activity. Other terms used to describe why they thought it was easy include, easy to write (n=2), easy to access (n=3), and easy homework (n=1).

The adjective “good” was selected in the medium to high percentage range for all groups. Multiple reasons were given for choosing “good” which include good for communication (n=8), English study (n=6), and making friends (n=5). Selection for the remaining positive adjectives fell below 20 percent, and they were therefore analyzed together. Reasoning provided for their choice mirrored what was described above in that, overall, students found SNLL beneficial for both communicating with others and developing language skills related to writing.

### **Negative Perceptions to SNLL**

Findings from the open-ended responses to the negative adjectives resembled much of what the cognitive and behavioral anxiety scales revealed in that students referenced terms related to cognitive anxiety such as 1) lack of grammar/vocabulary/writing skills, 2) fear of sharing/commenting/communicating, 3) meeting new people, and 4) poor English ability to explain why they chose the given adjective to describe their SNLL experience. Ironically, low participating students gave many of the same reasons for negative adjective choice as the high participating students gave for positive adjective choice – sharing information with others, communicating with strangers, and having to practice English writing.

For “afraid”, all groups reported fear emanating from a lack of grammar knowledge (n=7), while only students in the medium and low participation groups referenced “fear” in addition due to communicating with others with respect to sharing (n=2), commenting (n=4), or communications in general (n=2). Interestingly, students in the high participation group did report sharing as being the reason for selecting “awkward” (n=3), indicating that while sharing was a source of awkwardness, it did not mitigate their participation. Twice as many students in the medium and low participation group selected “awkward” to express their perceptions towards SNLL; however, their reasoning was a combination of sharing stories with others (n=7) as well as a lack of English skills related to grammar, vocabulary and writing in general (n=8).

Half the students who selected “ashamed” in the medium participation group attributed poor English skills (n=5) to this feeling while the other half attributed their shame coming from sharing their stories with others (n=5), with three reporting shame emanating from sharing English

messages with group members they did not know personally. Students in the low participation group attributed shame emanating from their lack of English skills (n=6), indicating addressing English skills appears to be a priority for L2 SNLL participation, followed by overcoming fear of sharing stories with others. Educators are recommended to address feelings of shame early on when asking students to participate in SNLL activities.

The negative adjective reported most by the three groups was “difficult”. Students from all groups overwhelmingly referenced terms related to L2 writing such as writing itself (n=5), using correct grammar (n=5), creating content (n=2), and expressing thoughts (n=2) as their reasons for selecting “difficult” when describing SNLL. Only students in the low participation group referenced their lack of vocabulary knowledge (n=4) while students in medium and high groups used terms representing more complex elements of writing such as creating content and sentences, indicating vocabulary development is a good language area to focus on when attempting to elicit more participation from lower participating students. Given that approximately all of the students in the low participation group selected difficult (94%), instructors should attempt to simplify the activity by perhaps providing SNLL models, templates, and other scaffolding techniques.

Responses associated to cognitive anxiety were high among students in this study. Students in all participation groups reported to feel anxiety due to inadequate grammar and writing knowledge and referenced multiple terms found on the SLWAI such as fear of making mistakes, being evaluated and sharing compositions with others.

The last adjectives analyzed were “confused” and “embarrassed” which were only reported in the high percent range by the low participation group, indicating feelings of confusion and embarrassment may have a significant effect on participation levels. The main reason students in the low participation group gave for feeling embarrassed was confusion from the activity (n=5) due to poor English writing (n=4), grammar (n=3), vocabulary (n=3) and the organization (n=2) skills.

Through the SNLL adjective-description checklist, the study was able to provide a more complete understanding of how task value and L2 writing anxiety vary across SNLL participation groups. Benefits to writing skills were most often referenced as a positive attribute to SNLL while difficulties due to poor grammar knowledge were referenced the most when describing negative adjectives. Communication with others and development of writing skills were the two areas students in the high participation group referenced as most positive, while on the other hand, fear emanating from sharing writing content with others and writing incompetence were the two areas referenced as most negative by the low participation group. Here we have the same characteristic of SNLL being viewed in opposite ways depending on participation levels. There is a need for instructor supervision and grade-incentive in order to promote more online communication among low performing students.

Challenges identified by students through their negative adjective descriptions support finding from research question one in that cognitive anxiety related to insufficient grammar knowledge and writing skills. Poor grammar, low vocabulary knowledge, and fear of sharing writing with others were the greatest barrier to SNLL participation. Writing anxiety due to L2 incompetence and fear of criticism have been recognized in previous research (Abdel-Latif, 2015); however, the

current study went one step further by recognizing anxiety emanating not only from sharing first and final drafts of process writing with classmates, but also from sharing compositions in the form of posts, comments, and replies on social network platforms. Recommendations to mitigate anxiety are the same here as in previous studies (Abdel-Latif, 2015) in that students are encouraged to “improve their linguistic knowledge and writing ability” (p. 194). Such improvement for low and medium participating students should begin with vocabulary development and instructor scaffolding through SNLL activities.

## **Conclusion**

This study found that task value varied the most across participation groups followed by behavioral anxiety. Medium and high participating students reported to value elements of SNLL such as the opportunity 1) to practice communication, 2) to share writing with others, and 3) to develop writing skills. Opportunity for more communication with others was the most commonly given description of SNLL by high participating students, while shame emanating from sharing with others was given as a negative characteristic of SNLL by low participating students, indicating opposite perceptions toward the same characteristic of SNLL. The connection between sharing writing with others and SNLL participation was captured by the behavioral anxiety scale which enquired towards writing habits and strategies such as propensity to share compositions in English with others. Social language learning strategies are important for SNLL participation so low L2 proficiency students should be trained on how to share online messages with classmates.

## **Limitations and Future Studies**

This study had a number of limitations. Students were recruited from the same South Korean university which, along with a small sample size ( $n=78$ ), limits the extent findings can be generalized. Furthermore, ten percent of the course grade was allocated to the SNLL activity and this likely motivated grade-conscious students to participate. Future research may wish administer a pre- post-writing task to track potential changes in writing accuracy resulting from SNLL participation. Furthermore, high variation in participation continues to be a problem with SNLL. Future studies should attempt to identify how much instructor-supervision is required for low L2 proficiency students to participate on par with their higher proficient counterparts. Finally, educators should identify and refine instruction methods that help scaffold low proficient students to become more self-regulated with SNLL activities.

SNLL participation that occurs on SNS platforms like Facebook allows students to practice L2 communication. The current study shined new light on the influence and relationships task value and L2 writing anxiety have on L2 participation in SNLL context. Results from this study provided new insight to help language instructors increase participation among students with low participation as well as support students with high participation. In so doing, educators are given an added genre of writing activities to assist in second language acquisition, specifically with respect to L2 SNS communication that is becoming ubiquitous in our Internet-dependent society.

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank Konkuk University Glocal Campus for their research support, and Dr. Eric Hall for his contributions with data collection.

## References

- Al Zumor, A. W. Q., Al Refaai, I. K., Bader Eddin, E. A., & Aziz Al-Rahman, F. H. (2013). EFL students' perceptions of a blended learning environment: Advantages, limitations and suggestions for improvement. *English Language Teaching*, 6(10), 95-110.
- Abdel-Latif, M. M. (2015). Sources of L2 writing apprehension: a study of Egyptian university students. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 38(2), 194-212.
- Bailey, D. B. (2017). Predicting effects of learner characteristics on second language social media self-efficacy. *STEM Journal*, 18(4), 127-146.
- Bailey, D. B., Park, I.-W., & Haji, S. A. (2017). An investigation of Facebook for language learning: Better understanding perceptions and participation. *CALL-EJ*, 18(2), 14-30.
- Bailey, D. B., Lee, A. R., Vorst, T. C., & Crosthwaite, P. (2017). An investigation of differences and changes in L2 writing anxiety between blended and conventional English language learning context. *CALL-EJ*, 18(1), 22-39.
- Bosch, T. E. (2009). Using online social networking for teaching and learning: Facebook use at the University of Cape Town. *Communication: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, 35(2), 185-200.
- Bowman, N. D., & Akcaoglu, M. (2014). "I see smart people!": Using Facebook to supplement cognitive and affective learning in the university mass lecture. *Internet and Higher Education*, 23(1), 1-8.
- Blyth, A. (2015). Social media ethics in English language teaching. *Jalt CALL Journal*, 11(2), 165-176.
- Bong, M.-M. (2004). Academic motivation in self-efficacy, task value, achievement goal orientations, and attributional beliefs. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 6(97), 287-298.
- Cheng, Y.-S. (2002). Factors associated with foreign language writing anxiety. *Foreign Language Annals*, 35(5), 647-656.
- Cheng, Y.-S. (2004). A measurement of second language writing anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation. *Second Language Writing*, 13(4), 313-335.
- Eccles, J. S., Adler, T. F., Futterman, R., Goff, S. B., Kaczala, C. M., Meece, J. L., & Midgley, C. (1983). Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. In J. T. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and achievement motivation* (pp. 75-146). San Francisco: W. H. Freeman.
- Elliot, A. J. (1999). Approach and avoidance motivation and achievement goals. *Educational Psychologist*, 34(3), 169-189.
- Elliot, A. J., & McGregor, H. A. (1999). Test anxiety and the hierarchical model of approach and avoidance achievement motivation. *Educational Psychology*, 76(4), 628-644.
- Eren, O. (2012). Students' attitudes towards using social networking in foreign language classes: A Facebook example. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(20), 288-294.
- Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21(1), 112-126.
- Horwitz, E. K. (2010). Foreign and second language anxiety. *Language Teaching*, 43(2), 154-167.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.

- Hulleman, C. S., Godes, O., Hendricks, B. L., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (2010). Enhancing interest and performance with a utility value intervention. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(1), 880-895.
- Jiang, D. (2015). An empirical study on alleviating career English writing anxiety through cooperative learning in a Chinese polytechnic institute. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 5(1), 173-182.
- Kim, K. J. (2006). Writing apprehension and writing achievement Korean EFL college students. *English Teaching*, 6(1), 135-153.
- Klimanova, L., & Dembovskaya, S. (2013). L2 identity, discourse, and social networking in Russian. *Language Learning and Technology*, 17(1), 69-88.
- Kurt, G., & Atay, D. (2007). The effects of peer feedback on the writing anxiety of prospective Turkish teachers of EFL. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Education*, 3(1), 12-23.
- Lange, C., Costley, J., & Lock, S. (2016). Informal cooperative learning in small groups: The effect of scaffolding on participation. *Issues in Education Research*, 26(2), 260-279.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1989). Anxiety and second-language learning: Toward a theoretical clarification. *Language Learning*, 39(2), 251-275.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: A review of the literature. *Language Learning*, 41(1) 85-117.
- Mills, N. (2011). Situated learning through social networking communities: The development of joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire. *CALICO Journal*, 28(2), 345-368.
- Mitchell, K. (2012). A social tool: Why and how ESOL students use Facebook. *CALICO Journal*, 29(3), 471-493.
- Noordin, N. (2012). Effect of dialogue journal writing through the use of conventional tools and e-mail on writing anxiety in the ESL context. *English Language Teaching*, 5(1). 10-19.
- Pae, J. K. (2007). Wiki-based English writing: Its effect on English writing proficiency and anxiety and Korean learners' perceptions. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning*, 10(1), 81-105.
- Pae, T. I. (2012). Skill-based L2 anxieties revisited: Their intra-relations and the inter-relations with general foreign language anxiety. *Applied Linguistics*, 34(2), 232-252.
- Palincsar, A. S., & Herrenkohl, L. R. (2002). Designing collaborative learning contexts. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(1), 26-32.
- Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. H. (2002). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Raved, L., & Assaraf, O. (2011). Attitudes towards science learning among 10th-grade students: A qualitative look. *International Journal of Science Education*, 33(9), 1219-1243.
- Saito, Y., & Samimy, K. K. (1996). Foreign language anxiety and language performance: A study of learner anxiety in beginning, intermediate, and advanced-level college students of Japanese. *Foreign Language Annals*, 29(2), 239-249.
- Schunk, D. H. (1995). *Self-efficacy and education and instruction*. In J. E. Maddux (Ed.) *Self efficacy, adaption, and adjustment: Theory, research, and application* (pp. 281-303). New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Sin, E. H. (2004). Korean high school students' foreign language listening test anxiety. *Foreign Language Education*, 11(4), 107-131.
- Spielberger, C. D. (2010). State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology. 1. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken.

- Wigfield, A., & Cambria, J. (2010). Students' achievement values, goal orientations, and interest: Definitions, development, and relations to achievement outcomes. *Developmental Review, 30*(1), 1–35.
- Wolters, A. C., & Pintrich, P. R. (1998). Contextual differences in student motivation and self-regulated learning in mathematics, English, and social studies classrooms. *Instructional Science, 26*(1-2), 27-47.