Title of Project:
Assessing Second Language Writing in
Higher Education: A Longitudinal Study

Researcher:
Minkyung Kim
Georgia State University
mkim89@gsu.edu

Research Supervisor:
Dr. Scott Crossley
Georgia State University

Minkyung Kim

Project Summary:
Writing skills are essential elements of successful development in second language (L2) academic contexts. However, few studies have investigated the longitudinal development of L2 writing in relation to language knowledge, cognitive skills, and language production features in higher education. Thus, the purpose of the proposed dissertation is to investigate the longitudinal development of L2 writing for English as a second language (ESL) students in the U.S.A. in relation to language skills (i.e., vocabulary and reading), cognitive skills (i.e., attention, working memory, and general knowledge), and language production features (i.e., lexical sophistication and language bursts).

The dissertation will use longitudinal data with two data collections over a six-month interval. Participants will be around 100 undergraduate ESL students. The dissertation will examine (a) the longitudinal relationship between L2 writing success and general cognitive resources (i.e., attention, working memory, general knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and reading skills); (b) the longitudinal relationship between L2 writing success and the ability to turn verbal ideas into written text; and (c) the longitudinal relationship among writing, reading, and vocabulary in the L2. Latent change score models will be used to analyze the data.

The proposed dissertation will contribute to expanding our understanding of L2 students' writing development that may involve a complex array of the development of language and cognitive skills along with language production features. Pedagogically, the dissertation will provide practitioners with systematic assessment data on ESL students' L2 writing development, which may help design better writing support programming and services in higher education.