

การใช้บันทึกแบบสนทนาเพื่อพัฒนาความสามารถทางการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ ของผู้เรียน

Using Dialogue Journals to Enhance Students' Writing Ability

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ได้ศึกษาผลกระทบของการใช้การเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนาที่มีต่อการพัฒนาความสามารถในการเขียนของผู้เรียนทั้งทางด้านความคล่องแคล่วและความถูกต้อง ตลอดจนทัศนคติของผู้เรียนที่มีต่อการเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนา กลุ่มตัวอย่างของงานวิจัยนี้เป็นนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยชั้นปี 1 จำนวน 45 คนในมหาวิทยาลัยแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดภูเก็ต กลุ่มตัวอย่างเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนาเป็นระยะเวลา 15 สัปดาห์ โดยมีการแลกเปลี่ยนบันทึกแบบสนทนาทั้งระหว่างเพื่อนร่วมชั้นเรียนและกับครูผู้สอน ข้อมูลในการวิจัยครั้งนี้มาจากผลคะแนนของกลุ่มตัวอย่างจากแบบทดสอบการเขียนทั้งก่อนและหลังการใช้การเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนา ตลอดจนการตอบแบบสอบถามทัศนคติของกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่มีต่อการเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนา แบบสอบถามความวิตกกังวลในการเขียนและความเต็มใจในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษ ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ความสามารถทางการเขียนโดยรวมของกลุ่มตัวอย่างเพิ่มขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .01 ตลอดจนกลุ่มตัวอย่างมีทัศนคติเชิงบวกต่อการเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนา นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิจัยยังพบว่าความวิตกกังวลในการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของกลุ่มตัวอย่างลดลง

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ขณะที่ความเต็มใจในการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษเพิ่มสูงขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ หลังจากการใช้การเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนา บทความนี้มุ่งนำเสนอประโยชน์ในการใช้การเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนาเพื่อการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพและเพื่อส่งเสริมการเรียนการเขียนโดยมีผู้เรียนเป็นศูนย์กลางในบริบทการศึกษาของประเทศไทย

คำสำคัญ: การเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนา, ความสามารถทางการเขียน, ความคล่องแคล่ว และความถูกต้องทางการเขียน, ทักษะคิดที่มีต่อการเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนา

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of using dialogue journals to enhance students' writing ability in terms of fluency and accuracy. The participants were 45 first-year students at a university in Phuket, Thailand. Each participant was required to write a dialogue journal entry once a week for 15 weeks. Participants then exchanged journals with peers and were asked to read and respond to the entries. A pre- and post-writing test and a questionnaire soliciting attitudes toward their use of dialogue journals served as instruments for data collection. The findings indicated a significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores in the participants' overall writing performance ($p < .01$) as well as the participants reported having positive attitudes toward the use of dialogue journals. In addition, the participants were required to complete the two questionnaires of writing apprehension and willingness to communicate before and after the study.

The results showed that the participants' writing apprehension reduced while their willingness to communicate in English increased after the

implementation of dialogue journals. Pedagogical implications for effective EFL writing instruction using dialogue journals are proposed.

Keywords: dialogue journals, EFL writing ability, fluency and accuracy, attitudes toward the implementation of dialogue journals

INTRODUCTION

English is a foreign language in the Thai context where the English language is mainly used in the academic setting and in workplaces (Chuenchaichon, 2015). In recent years, the increasing importance of English has been emphasized due to a need to prepare Thai students for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), in which English will be used for communication among ASEAN-members. While all four basic skills of English are essential to convey effective communication, writing is one of the skills Thai people need to acquire. Writing ability can be a predictor of learners' future academic and career success (Weigle, 2005). Yet, it is challenging as it requires learners to acquire specific strategies in order to meet the demands of particular writing contexts (Hyland, 2003). The level of writing difficulty prominently increases in EFL contexts where the language is not commonly used, learners rarely assimilate the necessity of English writing (Foley, 2013) and writing classes are conducted using traditional teacher-centered instruction (Deveney, 2005).

English writing has been found troublesome and has become the most prevailing English language problem that Thai EFL learners encounter (Chuenchaichon, 2015). Writing difficulties in Thailand have been reported by several researchers. According to Pawapatcharaudom (2007), Thai learners view writing as the most challenging skill when compared to the other three

skills (speaking, listening, reading) in English. This is in line with a study by Chaisiri (2010) which pointed out the anxiety-provoking complications Thai university students face when writing compositions. It has been suggested that Thai EFL learners are in need of seeking consultation from the teacher or academic support from their peers so as to lessen their writing difficulties (Pimsarn, 2013; Wilang & Satitdee, 2015).

In the Thai context, EFL writing classes are likely to be conducted through teacher-centered instruction (Deveney, 2005; Dhanarattigannon, 2008). The teacher-centered approach in writing pedagogy has been seen as the main obstacle in EFL education. The drawback of the traditional classroom is clearly visible in Thai EFL students who have become passive and dependent in learning; as a result, they lack the ability of critical and creative thinking (Thamraksa, 2003). It also has resulted in students' limited freedom to express themselves through genuine interaction and their lack of engagement in the classroom (Dueraman, 2012). Suwanarak and Phothongsunan (2008) also pointed out Thai EFL students discerned themselves as unsuccessful English learners although they held positive views regarding benefits from English learning. They also perceived that their English literacy couldn't serve effectively for real-life communication or academic use in higher education after completing several English courses.

Concerns over writing difficulty in EFL contexts have led to a call for an educational shift from teacher-to-student traditional instruction to a student-centered approach in writing classes. This shift can "allow for a depth in the learning process through the students and teachers active participation in the learning process—a participation that allows for an unlimited amount of creativity" (Watanabe, 1999, p. 1). Similarly, Kulprasit and Chiramanee (2012)

suggested that the use of pair-work collaboration and peer-to-peer interaction as a new instrument in establishing this shift to a student-centered approach in Thai EFL teaching and learning context. In spite of a preference for teacher-dominated approaches including conventional corrective feedback in Thailand, the role of learners and teachers are supposed to coexist side by side in EFL classes and both should be promoted as equally valuable to the development of students' performance (Kulprasit & Chiramanee, 2012).

In the past few decades, the use of dialogue journals, an outgrowth of journal writing, has been one of the new writing approaches widely used to enhance English writing classes and promote student-centered pedagogy in EFL contexts. Peyton (1993) defines a written dialogue journal as “a written conversation in which a student and teacher communicate regularly over a semester, school year, or course. Students write as much as they choose and the teacher writes back regularly, responding to students' questions and comments” (p.1). Dialogue journals serve as an on-going written conversation between an individual student and a teacher or other writing partner (Peyton, 2000; Peyton & Reed, 1990). It utilizes the writing process in which students decide the writing topics and the length of their writing while a teacher gives written responses in order to offer insights or initiate new ideas without performing as an evaluator/rater (Peyton, 1986; Peyton, 2000). The main focus of dialogue journal writing is to provide more opportunities and freedom so that learners can explore their interests on a wide selection of topics and in a diversity of writing genres and styles. (Peyton, 1983). It is believed that students learn to adopt grammatical forms and structures by reading the teacher's responses and mimicking them. Dialogue journals can be employed either by having students give and receive immediate responses during class

sessions or out of class (Peyton, 2000). In addition, journal partners can either be a teacher or another learner. The exchanges can also be done between classmates or among learners in other classes (Peyton, 2000). According to Steffensen (1988), the effectiveness of the method is due to diminishing control over students as well as promoting their individuality and ownership in learning. This is consistent with the notion given by Atwell (1987) that the students felt equally respected and supported in both pairings due to the fact that "The writer's need for response can come from a variety of sources" (p. 48).

Studies have confirmed that students can benefit greatly from having a classmate as their writing partner (e.g., Hail & George, 2001). With more relatively equal status, pairings with peers can encourage students to learn how to communicate using their limited English without pressure from evaluation of the teacher (Bromley, 1995). Regarding the efficacy of dialogue journals on students' learning, positive effects have been confirmed in several empirical studies. Benefits of using dialogue journals include improved writing ability (e.g., Liao & Wong, 2010; Rokni & Seifi, 2013), reduced language anxiety (Song, 1997), and the promotion of student-centered classrooms (Crumley, 1998).

The implementation of dialogue journal writing has long proved to be beneficial in assisting students to overcome writing difficulties. While Thai EFL learners experience writing difficulties and often seek teacher support, as shown in numerous research studies (e.g., Bennui, 2008; Chiravate 2011; Kaewcha, 2013), there have been very few studies conducted with Thai learners of English (e.g., Kulprasit & Chiramanee, 2012; Puengpipattrakul, 2014). Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the impact of dialogue

journals on undergraduate students' writing ability through the integration of teacher-to-learner and peer-to-peer social interactions.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was too investigate the impact of dialogue journals on students' writing ability in terms of fluency and accuracy as well as their attitudes toward the implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Interaction

In the implementation of dialogue journals, the notion of exchanging information with a teacher or between learners through written communication is strongly correlated with Vgotsky's assertion on the connection between social interaction and language acquisition (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990 cited in Garmon, 2001). According to Vygotsky (1986, cited in Aimin, 2013), the development derived from the phenomenon which is called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86 as cited in Ohta, 1995). Likewise, language acquisition can be perceived as an outcome of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) when learners interact through social interaction. More opportunities for learners to engage in learner-to-learner or collaborative interaction will increase in the L2 classroom when

teachers increasingly adopt the use of pair and group work in the classroom (Long & Porter, 1985 as cited in Ohta, 1995). Group and pair work offer a channel of communication in order for learners to engage in meaningful and authentic interaction to construct L2 meanings in their own social context (Khaliliaqdam, 2014).

Related Studies in EFL Contexts

Many research studies have shown that dialogue journals have been effective with diverse participants on a wide range of educational settings in ESL/EFL contexts, and have provided positive evidence of benefits on students' learning development in EFL contexts. Specifically in EFL contexts, a study of Liao and Wong (2010) examined the effects of dialogue journal writing in Taiwan. Forty-one participants were asked to write journal entries and the teacher wrote responses by asking questions or giving comments on the content. The findings of the study showed positive evidence of improvement in the participants' writing fluency and significant improvement in the aspects of content, organization and vocabulary. In addition, Foroutan et al. (2013) conducted a comparative study between dialogue journal writing and topic-based writing tasks at a university in Malaysia. The topic-based group received conventional writing instruction and explicit corrective feedback on the participants' writing while the dialogue journal group had dialogue journal writing and received feedback indirectly. The results revealed that the participants in the dialogue journal group outperformed in overall writing performance, particularly in the aspects of content and vocabulary. Most recently, Dabbagh (2017) conducted a six-month study with 84 intermediate Iranian learners. The experimental group was asked to write weekly journals, and then received feedback on its content from the instructor while the control

group experienced conventional instruction. The results indicated significant difference between the experimental and control group, which confirmed the benefits of dialogue journals on the participants' improvement in overall writing performance.

Related Studies in Thai EFL Contexts

Although many studies have been conducted to investigate the implementation of dialogue journals in EFL contexts, very little research has been done in Thai EFL contexts.

One was a study of 27 voluntary Thai first-year undergraduate students by Puengpipattrakul (2014), utilizing dialogue journals as an alternative assessment of the course. The participants were assigned to write four dialogue journal entries on the course-related topics. Then, they received comments and feedback from the teacher. The quantitative findings indicated improvement in the participants' writing performance in terms of fluency after the treatment. Most of the participants agreed that the use of dialogue journals encourage them to communicate in a non-threatening environment.

Kulprasit and Chiramanee (2012) conducted a study of 42 lower secondary students, incorporating peer feedback to enhance journal writing in the EFL writing class. All the participants were undergoing the initial training to learn and practice grammatical rules in the first three weeks. Then, each participants was required to write a journal entry on the weekly basis on the weekly basis for the next 8 weeks. Each was paired with a partner with higher writing proficiency. The partners exchanged journal entries to give corrective feedback on grammatical points. Besides the statistically significant improvement in the students' overall writing performance, their positive attitudes toward both journal writing and peer feedback were shown. It could be concluded that the incorporation of journal writing with peer feedback into

EFL writing instruction facilitates students to foster these new techniques and master writing ability through collaborative learning atmosphere.

Although some significant benefits of using dialogue journals have been shown in both Asian EFL and Thai EFL contexts, the participants in those studies are mostly young learners receiving responses from their teacher or dialogue journals were used as merely an alternative assessment or a supplement to the existing course. Therefore, this study examines the impact of fully incorporating dialogue journals into a Thai EFL classroom through the integration of both teacher-to-student and student-to-student interaction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Do dialogue journals enhance university-level students' writing ability in terms of fluency and accuracy?

Methodology

Population / Participants

The present study was conducted in a university in Phuket. The population consisted of 2,081 first-year undergraduate students in the faculty of Management Sciences in the academic year 2015. The participants, 45 non-English major first-year students who were enrolled in the English preparation course, Foreign Language Development Project 2, were selected using purposive sampling. The study was conducted using dialogue journals within weekly class sessions of the course, which was designated to increase English literacy of students who are beginners of English proficiency, and to boost their confidence in using English. Simultaneously, the participants were

attending regular courses including English for General Communication 1 which were allocated by the university.

Instruments

In order to answer the research questions of the study, four instruments were designed and developed, which included dialogue journal entries, a writing test, journal entries and a questionnaire on students' attitudes toward the implementation of dialogue journals.

1) A writing test

A writing test, used as a pre- and post-test, was developed to assess the participants' writing ability before and after the implementation of dialogue journals. The participants were required to write for one hour on the topic "My ideal vacation plan". The test was independently scored by two experienced teachers utilizing a scoring rubric. The scoring rubric was an analytical scale divided into fluency and accuracy aspects. Scores for each aspect was 6; thus the total score was 12. The scoring rubric was based on the analytical scale devised by John Anderson found in Harris (1968, cited in Hughes, 1989). The agreement between the two raters (a native and a non-native teacher) was measured in order to ensure the inter-rater reliability. The inter-rater reliability between the two raters was strongly correlated ($r = .982, p < .01$).

2) Questionnaire on students' attitudes toward the implementation of dialogue journals

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire aimed to examine the participants' attitudes toward dialogue journals. The questionnaire was adapted from those of Liao and Wong (2010), and Roe and Stallman (1994), consisted of 8 items of attitudes toward the implementation of dialogue journals and 9 items on its effects. The questionnaire was translated into Thai

and piloted with a group of 30 students who were not in the main study. Cronbach's alpha was performed in order to investigate the internal consistency of the items in the questionnaire. The overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.92, suggesting that the questionnaire had high internal consistency.

Data Collection

The study was conducted for 15 weeks in the first semester of the academic year 2016 and the data was collected throughout the semester. The details were as follows.

Week 1: a writing test was administered for an hour to initially investigate the participants' writing ability. The pre-test writing was independently scored by two raters based on scoring rubric devised by John Anderson found in Harris (1968, cited in Hughes, 1989).

Weeks 2-14: The participants engaged in dialogue journal writing throughout 13 weekly sessions. At the beginning of each session, the participants choose a topic of their own interest. The participants were randomly put in pairs and each participant had a new partner every two weeks. The main purpose was to strengthen social interaction within the classroom through the exchanges with different partners as interlocutors. Then, each pair talked about their selected topics before starting their journal writing.

After the participants performed journal writing for 30 minutes, they exchanged their entries with their partners, reading and writing responses in terms of the content of the journal. They were allowed to ask questions or request clarification related to the misunderstanding. Any error correction in terms of grammatical rules or spelling was also acceptable. However, the participants were informed that error correction was not the main focus of

dialogue journal writing. After reading the responses, the owner of the entry wrote back. The exchange process took about 20 minutes. Finally, all the journal entries were collected by the researcher. This activity ran in the weekly classroom session throughout the semester, approximately 13 entries by each participant in 13 weeks.

Each week four journal entries were randomly selected and examined by the researcher. Written responses and comments were given on the content of the entry, not the language points in order to maintain the main feature of dialogue journal writing. The entries were given back to the owners for further replies and exchanges. Additionally, the researcher would choose the most common errors found in these selected entries in order to be presented to the whole class in a mini-teaching in the following week. Each week four new journal entries went through the same procedure described, so all the entries were viewed and responded by the researcher; 4 entries per week.

Week 15: The writing test with the same topic as the pre-test was administered for an hour. The purpose was to examine whether there was any significant difference in the participants' writing ability after the practice of dialogue journal writing. The post-test writing was scored by the same set of raters and with the same scoring rubrics as in the pre-test. Upon the completion of the post-test, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants to examine their attitudes toward the use of dialogue journals.

Data Analysis

1. The scores of the participants' pre- and post-tests were compared by using a paired samples t-test to find out whether there was any significance difference in their writing ability in aspects of fluency and accuracy after the implementation of dialogue journals.

2. In order to examine the participants' attitudes toward the implementation of dialogue journals, the participants' responses in the questionnaire were analyzed and determined by mean scores. The mean scores of their responses were interpreted as follows: 4.21 – 5.00 = strongly agree; 3.41 – 4.20 = agree; 2.61 – 3.40 = moderately agree; 1.81 – 2.60 = disagree; 1.00 – 1.80 = strongly disagree.

FINDINGS

1. Participants' Writing Performance

In order to compare the writing performance of the subjects before and after the use of dialogue journals, the pre- and post-tests were scored using scoring scale. The writing performance was a combination of 2 aspects: fluency and accuracy. Each writing aspect ranged from score 1 to 6 and the total score was 12. The pre- and post-test scores were presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Comparison of Writing Scores Before and After the Use of Dialogue Journals

Writing scores	Pre-test		Post-test		Development	t-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Fluency	1.60	0.78	3.84	0.95	2.24	14.44**
Accuracy	1.88	0.88	2.19	0.95	0.30	2.23*
Total scores (12)	3.48	1.55	6.03	1.73	2.54	9.89**

significant at **p < .01, *p < .05

In table 1, the mean score of the participants' pre-test was 3.48 out of 12, (S.D. = 1.55) and that of their post-test was 6.03 (S.D. = 1.73), indicating that the participants did significantly better in the post-test ($t = 9.89$; $p < .01$). Their performance after the implementation of dialogue journals increased significantly (Development = 2.54; $t = 9.89$; $p < .01$). It can be inferred that the implementation of dialogue journals enhanced the participants' overall writing ability.

Concerning fluency and accuracy, the analysis of the participants' writing scores in the pre- and post-tests also showed significantly better performance in these two aspects. In terms of fluency, the mean score of the participants in the pre-test was 1.60 out of 6 (S.D. = 0.78) and that in the post-test was 3.84 (S.D. = 0.95). The development of score was 2.24, indicating that their writing fluency significantly improved ($t = 14.44$; $p < .01$). In terms of accuracy, the pre-test score was 1.88 out of 6 (S.D. = 0.88) and the post-test score was 2.19 (S.D. = 0.95). The post-test score was 0.30 significantly higher than the pre-test score ($t = 2.23$; $p < 0.05$). In other words, the participants scored higher in terms of writing accuracy after the treatment.

2. Participants' Attitudes toward the Use of Dialogue Journals

In order to examine the participants' attitudes toward the use of dialogue journals, their responses to each item in the Likert-scaled questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) are reported in Table 4.

Table 2: The Participants' Attitudes toward the Use of Dialogue Journals

Statement	Mean	S.D.	Level of agreement
1. I like it when my friend reads and responds to my journal.	4.38	.777	Strongly agree
2. I can choose my own writing topic.	4.31	.701	Strongly agree
3. I enjoy reading my own English writing.	4.29	.626	Strongly agree
4. I like it when my teacher reads and responds to my writing.	4.27	.654	Strongly agree
5. I feel closer to my teacher by reading his/her comments.	4.27	.654	Strongly agree
6. I can express my ideas freely and share my opinions.	4.24	.773	Strongly agree
7. I feel more confident in writing.	4.13	.588	Agree

Table 2 illustrates the mean scores of the participants' attitudes towards dialogue journals after 15 weeks of practicing dialogue journals. The mean scores ranged from 3.27 to 4.38. The participants' responses to most of the items were positive. The total mean score of all items was 3.97, which could be interpreted that the participants held positive attitudes toward the implementation of dialogue journals and showed their agreement on its benefits.

The highest mean scores of agreement came from 6 out of 17 items (4.21 – 5.00 = strongly agree). Specifically, the participants' responses were highly positive to the exchange of dialogue journals with their peers (item 1, \bar{x} = 4.38). In addition to pair-work and collaboration with their peers, the participants strongly agreed to the importance of responses given by the teacher (item 4, \bar{x} = 4.27), and that dialogue journals strengthened their

relationship with the teacher (item 5, $\bar{x} = 4.27$). Their highly positive attitudes toward the writing activity and a strong preference for dialogue journals mainly derived from freedom to decide and choose topics based on their own interests (item 2, $\bar{x} = 4.31$). The participants perceived that their own journal entries were more satisfactory to reread (item 3, $\bar{x} = 4.29$). The participants also showed strongly agreement on benefits of dialogue journals in providing them with more opportunities to express their ideas and share their own experiences in writing (item 6, $\bar{x} = 4.24$).

The participants held positive attitudes toward dialogue journals ($3.41 - 4.20 = \text{agree}$) in 9 out of 17 items. The participants felt more confident in writing (item 7, $\bar{x} = 4.13$); thus perceived that they improved their writing skill (item 8, $\bar{x} = 4.09$) and were able to write more fluently (item 11, $\bar{x} = 3.96$) after practicing dialogue journals. Dialogue journals did not only provide them with more freedom in writing but also their ideas were respected and valued (item 9, $\bar{x} = 4.00$; item 12, $\bar{x} = 3.93$). The participants also agreed that English writing tasks became more enjoyable (item 14, $\bar{x} = 3.69$; item 15, $\bar{x} = 3.58$), and they developed better relationship with their peers (item 10, $\bar{x} = 3.98$). Finally, they felt less anxious in writing dialogue journals because their journal entries were not marked (item 13, $\bar{x} = 3.76$).

The participants' moderately positive attitudes ($2.61 - 3.40 = \text{moderately agree}$) were reflected in their moderate agreement to two items of their concerns over writing quality (item 16, $\bar{x} = 3.38$) and grammatical accuracy (item 17, $\bar{x} = 3.27$). It can be inferred that while most of the participants exhibited more confidence and less fear in meaning-focused dialogue journal practice, they did not abandon the importance of improving their writing accuracy and producing fewer grammatical errors.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This research study aimed to investigate the impact of using dialogue journals on students' writing ability in terms of fluency and accuracy as well as to examine their attitudes' toward the implementation of dialogue journals. The main findings based on the two research questions can be summarized as follows.

1. The results have demonstrated a significant improvement of the participants' overall writing ability in terms of fluency and accuracy after the use of dialogue journals.

Analysis of the participants' writing performance scores revealed significant improvement in terms of writing fluency; they scored significantly higher in the post-test. The findings support those of Liao and Chen (2010) as well as Rokni and Seifi (2013) who confirmed a similar impact of using dialogue journals on EFL learners' writing fluency. Rokni and Seifi pointed out that the students tended to write more fluently without interruption because they experienced less fear of having others read their writing and gain more confidence from not being evaluated. In addition, dialogue journal writing succeeded in providing more freedom and encouraging the participants to generate more ideas and reflect themselves in meaningful writing. In other words, fluency is the first priority in writing development as long as communication can deliver its contents and meaning effectively.

The development of the participants' writing accuracy also seemed to be evident. The participants' writing accuracy score increased significantly in the post-test. Thus, it may be possible to say that the use of dialogue journals helped increase the subjects' writing performance in both fluency and accuracy.

Interestingly, in spite of the fact that the participants were told to mainly focus on meaning rather than form while writing in dialogue journals, they learned to write more grammatically correct clauses and sentences throughout the implementation of dialogue journals. This might be the result of continuous practice of writing and formal instruction on common grammatical errors. It should be pointed out that, in addition to practicing dialogue journals, certain common grammatical points were selected from the journal entries by the researcher and presented to the participants in a subsequent week. This might have helped the participants learn more grammatical patterns and structures; thus they produced fewer grammatical errors. The significant gain of accuracy score in the post-test demonstrated that the participants learned to adopt some certain grammatical rules and structural patterns. Previous studies reported that once dialogue journal writing keeps on and learners steadily progress their writing fluency, their grammatical errors will continue to decrease (Crumley, 1998)

2. The results revealed that the participants' attitudes toward the implementation of dialogue journals were positive. The participants showed agreement to the implementation and a strong preference for dialogue journals.

The highly positive attitudes were evident in the items regarding the exchanges of dialogue journals both with their peers and the teacher, indicating that the students' highly positive attitude toward social interaction with their peers and the teacher. This integration of teacher-to-student with peer-to-peer interaction in dialogue journals demonstrated that the role of teachers and peers was equally crucial to students' development.

The findings of the present study support those of Anderson et al. (2011) and Dressler and Tweedie (2016) that students put more efforts into their own learning when a solid relationship with a teacher is formed through their exchange of dialogue journals. Dressler and Tweedie also discovered that the use of dialogue journals accelerated and stabilized the relationship between an instructor and students even during shorter periods of time. Regarding peer-to-peer interaction, the findings of the study was consistent with Vacca and Vacca's (1993) as well as Atwell (1987)'s notions that learners need opportunities to confer with peers and writing skills requires responses from a variety of sources. Peer-to-peer interaction among a diversity of learners has been found to be an important tool of instruction in EFL writing classes. While aiming to maintain students' individuality, the implementation of dialogue journals can effectively promote collaborative learning rather than competition within the classroom (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). These findings of the study are in line with previous studies (Dressler & Tweedie, 2016; Foroutan et al., 2013; Mirhosseini, 2009), which reported that most students expressed positive attitudes toward dialogue journal writing as well as the writing course and preferred dialogue journals over other writing tasks.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Based on the study's main findings, the use of dialogue journals had significant impact on the participants' overall writing ability and they possessed positive attitudes toward the implementation. Pedagogical implications for effective EFL writing instruction can be proposed. The findings of the present study have supported the notion that dialogue journals can be incorporated into EFL university-level classes, even when learners are at very

beginning levels of writing fluency and have little previous experience in writing. Mirhosseini (2009) confirmed that dialogue journals can be “employed at almost all proficiency levels and in all educational contexts” (p.43).

One noteworthy aspect of dialogue journal writing is that its implementation can completely turn the traditional classroom completely into a learner-centered activity (Morini, 1994). As opposed to traditional classroom context, dialogue journals allow teachers to better understand their learners' ZPD and to provide more individually tailored input to each learner's need (Chisea & Bailey, 2015). Therefore, social interaction through dialogue journals reflects implications which would encourage students' development of their interactional ability and ownership in learning. This can potentially establish a shift from traditional teacher-centered setting into learner-centered learning where students will no longer be passive learners and be able to find their own ways of controlling the learning process.

2. The participants in the present study held positive attitudes toward the implementation of dialogue journals; indeed, they were enthusiastic about selecting writing topics based on their own interest and expressing their own ideas freely. As a result, the participants exhibited more confidence in writing and no concerns over marking. This reflects a pedagogical implication that instructors can initiate dialogue journals as the basis for all writing activities inside EFL classes. The implementation can also assist EFL learners in gaining more familiarity and engagement in writing in the most non-threatening, anxiety-free and enjoyable manner which is long lost in traditional classroom context. In particular, some participants were found to select more challenging or social-interest topics for their journal writing in the latter weeks (e.g., facebook addiction, advice to tourists in Phuket, traffic problems). At the same

time, some used dialogue journal writing as a channel to reflect their own learning or more personal issues. (e.g., ways to improve my English).

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The present study makes an important contribution to the EFL writing context. The study was one of very few studies conducted to enhance writing ability by employing dialogue journals and the integration of teacher-to-student and student-to-student interaction. However, this study is limited in some aspects. In relation to the limitations of the study, some recommendations for further studies include

1. 45 participants in the present study were selected using purposive sampling and a control group was not included in the research design, which limits the generalizability of the results. Further investigation between an experiment and a control group is needed in order to determine the true impact of using dialogue journals and to isolate other feasible factors affecting the outcomes of the intervention.

2. The implementation of dialogue journal writing typically has its focus on fluency rather than accuracy. Participants were asked to focus on content, not grammar and the partners were asked to comment on contents, not forms. Further research should be carried out to investigate the impact of using dialogue journals on both writing fluency and accuracy. In future research, dialogue journals partners can possibly be asked not only to read journal entries and give responses on the contents but also to give feedback on grammatical points to see whether this can help students develop their accuracy as effectively as their fluency.

3. In the present study, the implementation of dialogue journals was conducted within the weekly classroom sessions. In order to strengthen and broaden social interaction through the use of dialogue journals and maximize its benefits, further studies should be conducted to determine the impact of dialogue journals that are written and exchanged outside the classroom. Chiesa and Bailey (2015) emphasized that dialogue journals can function effectively as “out-of-class resources in making the communication between the teacher and the learners systematically dialogic” (p. 20)

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