The Effectiveness of Teacher Feedback and Peer Feedback on EFL Students' Writing Performance
ประสิทธิภาพของการให้ผลสะท้อนกลับโดยครูและโดยเพื่อนต่อความสามารถในการเขียนของนักเรียนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

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Abstract

This comparative study investigated the effectiveness of teacher feedback vis-à-vis peer feedback on EFL writing development through dialogue journal writing. The participants were 50 Mathayom 4 (Grade 10) students at a private Islamic secondary school, Yala province. The participants were divided into two experimental groups, each consisting of 25 students: the teacher feedback group and the peer feedback group. Research instruments were 1) a pre- and post- writing test and 2) dialogue journal writing. Both groups had to write dialogue journal once a week for 10 weeks. The journals were exchanged and corrected by the teacher and the designated peers. The finding indicated that peer feedback led to a significant improvement on the participants' overall writing ability and writing fluency than teacher feedback ($p < .01$). However, neither teacher feedback nor peer feedback helped in the improvement of writing accuracy.

Keywords: Teacher feedback, Peer feedback, EFL writing ability

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบนี้เพื่อศึกษาประสิทธิภาพของการให้ผลสะท้อนกลับโดยครูกับการให้ผลสะท้อนกลับโดยเพื่อนต่อความสามารถในการเขียนของนักเรียนที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศผ่านการเขียนบันทึกโต้ตอบ กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 4 จำนวน 50 ในโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาเอกชนสอนศาสนาแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดยะลา กลุ่มตัวอย่างประกอบด้วยกลุ่มทดลอง 2 กลุ่มๆ ละ 25 คน คือ กลุ่มที่ได้รับผลสะท้อนกลับโดยครูและกลุ่มที่ได้รับผลสะท้อนกลับโดยเพื่อน เครื่องมือในการวิจัยคือ 1) แบบทดสอบการเขียนทั้งก่อนและหลังการทดลอง 2) การเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนา (Dialogue journal) กลุ่มตัวอย่างทั้งสองกลุ่มต้องเขียนบันทึกแบบสนทนาสัปดาห์ละครั้งเป็นเวลา 10 สัปดาห์ และมีการแลกเปลี่ยนบันทึกแบบสนทนาและได้รับผลสะท้อนกลับโดยครูและเพื่อน ผลการวิจัยพบว่า การให้ผลสะท้อนกลับโดยเพื่อนช่วยพัฒนาความสามารถทางการเขียนด้านความสามารถในการเขียนโดยรวมและความคล่องในการเขียนดีกว่าการให้ผลสะท้อนกลับโดย

ครูอย่างมีนัยสำคัญที่ระดับ .01 อย่างไรก็ตามทั้งการให้ผลสะท้อนกลับโดยครูและโดยเพื่อนไม่ได้ช่วยพัฒนาความสามารถใน
การเขียนด้านความถูกต้องทางไวยากรณ์แต่อย่างใด

คำสำคัญ : การให้ผลสะท้อนกลับโดยครู การให้ผลสะท้อนกลับโดยเพื่อน ความสามารถทางการเขียนของนักเรียนที่เรียน
ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

Introduction

Feedback is crucial in ESL/EFL context in a sense that it provides learners the information to revise their Interlingua (Ellis, 1985: 296). With regard to writing skill, feedback helps the learners to acquire second language through paying attention to both the correct forms and problematic features, which leads to the improvement of writing ability (Saengklaijaroen, 2012, p.70).

The aim of feedback can be either on writing fluency or accuracy. However, to provide feedback in order to achieve both writing proficiency, dialogue journal writing can be one of the effective approaches (Denne-Bolton, 2013, p.3). In dialogue journal, teachers' feedback can boost learners' writing fluency through providing questions and comments, initiating new topics, or asking questions (Peyton, 1993, p.2). Dialogue journal provide a platform for the learners to become fluent writer through exposing to meaningful, natural and functional experiences. In ESL and EFL context, learners can write as regularly as they choose. Through dialogue journaling, teachers can also give responses to develop learners' writing accuracy by modeling correct forms of language structure (Linnell, 2010, p25), paraphrasing, asking questions to clarify unclear sentences, and commenting on certain ideas (Denne-Bolton, 2013, p.7), and challenge their current level of proficiency with more complex language (Krashen, 1992, p.33).

In previous studies, teacher feedback on dialogue journals shows significant contributions on fluency and accuracy. Positive improvement on fluency was significant among EFL Taiwanese students (Liao & Wong, 2010, p.148) and Malaysian university students (Foroutan et al., 2013, p.213). Hence, dialogue journal provides an opportunity to write fluently and is a platform to practice skills that second language students need for other types of writing.

Accuracy, another contribution of dialogue journal is also found significantly through the use of teacher feedback. In Datzman's study (2011, p.40), for example, teacher's model of appropriate vocabulary and grammar through dialogue journals leads to improvement on grammatical knowledge. Similarly, Tuan's 15-week experimental study (2010, p.84) found that dialogue journal helped Vietnamese university students to write accurately.

Despite many benefits of teacher feedback on dialogue journal writing, a number of issues arise. Firstly, time management for regular responses seems to be a challenging and overwhelmed task for language teachers (Routman, 1991, p.231). Another disadvantage is that dialogue journal does not focus on forms or corrective feedback (Linnell, 2010, p.25). Indeed, non-native English language learners should also master grammatical knowledge and there is no doubt that they need to have corrective feedback while practicing dialogue journal writing (Liao & Wong, 2010, p.153). In Liao and Wong's study (2010,

p.153), some participants expected to have their grammatical errors corrected and they felt more motivated to write if there was error correction provided in their dialogue journal entries.

Alternatively, the burden in the traditional way to comment on dialogue journal entries can be replaced with peer feedback. Through the practice of peer feedback, learners can benefit from authentic interaction, joy of sharing their comments, positive attitude in EFL writing practice and being more confident to write fluently and accurately in English (Kulprasit & Chiramanee, 2012, p.47; Rokni & Seifi, 2013, p.63; Rattanaintanin, 2017, p.25).

However, there are several limitations for ESL/EFL writing teachers in employing peer feedback. As pointed out by Rollinson (2005, p.25), having peers to provide feedback is time constrained because of much time needed in reading, making notes and providing the comments orally or written. Moreover, more time is placed on the teachers to allocate initial persuasion on the value of peer feedback to accept peers as another qualified source in providing feedback. Another drawback is that writing teachers might be overwhelmed with their role in overseeing the peer feedback practice if an oral feedback takes place.

In Thai context, studies that compare the impact of teacher feedback and peer feedback through dialogue journal are rare and mostly focus on learners in higher education. In Rattanaintanin's study (2017, p.25), for example, it combined peer and teacher feedback in the dialogue journal practices to enhance a group of university students' writing proficiency without focusing on grammatical feedback. The findings not only showed significant improvement in the students' writing fluency but also on their accuracy. It was recommended by the researcher to have both content and forms focus in the use of dialogue journal to see if this can help Thai students to develop their accuracy as effectively as their fluency.

In previous studies, there were some that implemented either teacher or peer to provide grammatical feedback through the use of dialogue journal to develop Thai students' writing ability. Puengpipattrakul (2009, p.101) has reported a non-significant finding on writing accuracy when implementing teacher feedback on errors in the undergraduate students' dialogue journals. However, there was a significant improvement on the participants' accuracy in Kulprasit and Chiramanee's study (2012, p.47) through the use of trained peer feedback in dialogue journal. Interestingly, in another study conducted by Obrom (2013, p.42), a combination of teacher and peer feedback focusing on grammars leads to a significant improvement in language accuracy through the use of dialogue journal writing.

Therefore, it can be concluded that no studies have used both teacher feedback and peer feedback to compare their effectiveness on the writing development particularly of Muslim students who, based on the national O-Net scores, are in need of English-skill development.

Research Objectives

The present study was carried out to investigate the effectiveness of teacher feedback and peer feedback on EFL students' writing performance in terms of fluency and accuracy through dialogue journal writing.

Research methodology

Population and participants

   The present study was conducted at a private Islamic secondary school, Yala province, Thailand. The population consisted of 1,100 Mathayom 4 (Grade 10) students in the academic year of 2017. Fifty participants were selected by using purposive selection and recruited on voluntary basis. They were randomly divided into two groups: 25 students in the teacher feedback group (TFG) and 25 students in the peer feedback group (PFG).

Instruments

   1. A Writing Test

   A writing test was developed by the researcher and used as a pre- and post-test to assess the participants' writing performance before and after the use of dialogue journal and the two different types of feedback. The participants had 40 minutes to write on a topic titled "My Idol". The content validity of the writing test was evaluated by the three experts in second language teaching. The item was rated higher than 0.5 of the IOC index, meaning that it was acceptably conforming to the objective. For the students' global writing performance, the test was assessed holistically under 5-band scale based on an analytical scoring rubric scale devised by Ferris and Hedgcock (2005, p.310). For writing fluency and accuracy, the number of words and grammatical errors were counted based on Yoshihara (2008, p.5) and Tuan (2010, p.84) respectively. The test was independently graded by the researcher and an experienced English teacher. The agreement between the two raters was measured in order to ensure the inter-rater reliability. The inter-rater reliability between the two raters was correlated (r = .85, p < .01).

   The pre-writing test was also an instrument to identify the participants' five-most common errors. The five-most commonly found errors in the TFG and the PFG were (1) *part of speech* (*pronoun* and *verb* in particular), (2) tenses (particularly *past tense*), (3) *fragment*, (4) *subject-and-verb agreement* and (5) *word order* respectively.

   2. Dialogue Journal Entries

   All participants in both subject groups were required to write dialogue journal once a week for 10 weeks. A list of 30 topics was given to the participants to write. The participants were free to write at any length on any topics provided.

   3. Language practice exercises

   The language practice exercises aimed to help the participants in the PFG understand the usage of the five-most common grammatical errors found in all the participants pre-writing test. The exercises consisted of five-type grammatical activities (based on the five-common errors). Each activity dealt with one error type in one hour. The exercises were developed and taught by the researcher.

Data collection

Data was collected along 14 weeks from November 2017 to February 2018. The details of procedure were as follows:

Week 1: The purpose of the research, dialogue journal, and guidelines in writing dialogue journal were introduced to all the participants in two subject groups.

Then all participants were asked to take a pre-writing test for 40 minutes. This writing test was to examine the participants' writing performance prior to the treatment. Five-most common errors produced by the participants in the test were collected to be the target language focus in provision of corrective feedback for both subject groups.

Weeks 2 - 3: The participants in the PFG received explicit instructions by the researcher using the five language practice exercises.

Week 4: Both subject groups were asked to write a dialogue journal in 40 minutes once a week. After the participants finished their writing, the journal entries were collected by the researcher. For the TFG, the teacher later looked at their entries, corrected on the five-common aspects of errors, and gave responses before returning them to the owners in the next meeting. For the PFG, they were told to give the responses and corrective feedback to the designated partner in the next meeting.

Weeks 5 - 13

Teacher feedback group (TFG): When the class met, each participant in the TFG received his/her work back. In the first 20-minute session, the participants were asked to read the teacher's comments in their entries and asked for clarification on the errors marked by the teacher. Then they had 40 minutes to write a new topic of dialogue journal writing. When they finished writing their journals, the teacher collected the journals, which would be later read, responded and corrected by the teacher before returning them to the owners in the next meeting.

Peer feedback group (PFG): In the first 20 minutes of the class meeting, the participants were paired up with a designated peer who had different writing ability based on their pre-writing test performance so that the higher proficiency one could help the less proficiency. In this session, each pair read their partners' entry, gave responses and commented on the peer's grammatical points focusing on only the five-most common errors. Then they sat together, discussed, shared and asked for clarification if needed. Then, in the last 40 minutes of the meeting, all participants in the PFG started writing a new journal entry.

Data collection in the following eight weeks followed the same procedure of giving feedback in both groups as described above.

Week 14: All participants took a post-writing test in order to investigate the participants' writing performance after the treatment.

Results

The findings below indicate the contribution of teacher feedback and peer feedback on writing performance of the students through the use of dialogue journal writing.

The pre- and post-writing tests were rated using five-band scoring scale proposed by Ferris and Hedgcock (2005, p.310). Then all the data was averaged and compared by using a paired samples *t*-test to find any significant differences. The comparison is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean scores of overall writing performance before and after the use of dialogue journal and corrective feedback

Group	Pre-test		Post-test		t	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
TFG (N=25)	2.64	.70	2.96	.84	-1.995	.058
PFG (N=25)	2.56	.77	3.12	.60	-3.934**	.001

*$p < .01$

As shown in Table 1, there was no significant improvement in the teacher feedback group's overall writing ability. However, the peer feedback group's writing proficiency increased from band 2.56 to band 3.12, a significant increase of 0.56 band ($p < .01$).

The improvement of the peer feedback group's writing proficiency from band 2.56 (containing numerous, major grammatical errors, spelling and punctuation errors leading to comprehension difficulty) to band 3.12 (containing spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors causing reading distraction but compromising comprehensibility) indicates a significant shift in writing performance. However, the writing proficiency of the teacher feedback group remained in the same band, band 2.

Table 2 below presents the writing ability in terms of fluency of both subject groups. Based on Yoshihara's study (2008: 5), every word produced in the pre- and post-writing tests was counted. All the data was averaged and compared by using a paired samples *t*-test to find any significant differences.

Table 2: Mean scores of subjects' writing fluency

Group	Pre-test		Post-test		t	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
TFG (N=25)	94.28	50.41	97.16	53.97	-.264	.794
PFG (N=25)	49.36	27.14	81.16	54.34	-4.122**	.000

*$p < .01$

Table 2 shows the teacher feedback group's writing fluency had no significant increase in the post-test. However, in the peer feedback group, the average word produced was 49.36 in the pre-test and 81.16 in the post-test, a significant increase of 31.80 words ($p < .01$). In other words, the use of dialogue journal helped the group produce more words.

To confirm the finding above, a Mann-Whitney test was calculated to compare the improvement of writing fluency between the two groups. The result is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Comparison of writing fluency in Mann-Whitney Test

Group		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
diff	TFG	25	19.64	784.00	.004*
	PFG	25	31.36	491.00	
	Total	50			

($p < .05$)

Table 3 shows that the mean rank scores of the peer feedback group was 31.36, significantly higher than that of the teacher feedback group, which was 19.64 ($p < .05$). This finding confirmed the significant effectiveness of peer feedback in the peer feedback group's writing fluency over the teacher feedback group.

In terms of accuracy, all the five-common errors found in the participants' pre- and post-writing tests were counted based on Tuan (2010: 83). Then all the data was averaged and compared by using a paired samples *t*-test to find any significant differences. Table 4 shows development in writing accuracy in the teacher feedback group and the peer feedback group.

Table 4: Mean scores of subjects' writing accuracy

Group	Pre-test		Post-test		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
TFG (N=25)	13.80	10.11	13.48	5.73	.177	.861
PFG (N=25)	9.52	4.11	11.20	6.30	-1.482	.151

Table 4 demonstrates that there was no significant decrease of the grammatical errors in both subject groups. Although the teacher feedback group produced less grammatical errors in the pre-test, this is not significant. Interestingly, the peer feedback group wrote more grammatical errors. However, the

increase of grammatical errors was also not significant. This indicates that the corrective feedback given by the teacher and peers were not effective in improving their writing accuracy.

Discussion

This research study aimed to compare the impact of teacher feedback and peer feedback on students' writing ability in terms of fluency and accuracy through dialogue journal writing. The main findings based on the two research questions can be summarized as follows.

1. The results have demonstrated that peer feedback led to a significant improvement over teacher feedback in terms of the overall writing ability and writing fluency. The peer feedback group had significantly better writing proficiency and they could produce more words than the teacher feedback group. The findings support those of Tuan (2010, p.84), and Kulprasit and Chiramanee (2012, p.47) who confirmed a similar impact of using peer dialogue journal on EFL learners' overall writing proficiency and writing fluency. Kulprasit and Chiramanee (2012, p.73) pointed out that due to collaborative and interactive environment when peer feedback was integrated in dialogue journal writing, learners had opportunity to learn from each other to improve their writing fluency. Interestingly, dialogue journal writing with peer error correction in this study was effective in a sense that it did not impair the participants' writing fluency, a concern pointed out by Peyton (1993, p.5). Thus, peer corrective feedback in this study supported the participants to generate more ideas and write meaningfully.

One plausible explanation to the finding that writing fluency of the participants in teacher feedback group did not significantly improve might be due to the fact that they had already written an average of 94.28 words in the pre-test. Therefore, it was unlikely to produce a lot more words in the post-test. The finding is in line with a study conducted by Kulprasit and Chiramanee (2012, p.47) that the participants who wrote high number of words in the pre-test had least improvement in the post-test.

2. The finding shows that neither teacher feedback nor peer feedback significantly increased both groups' accuracy gains. Similar result was found in Puengpipattrakul's study (2009, p.96), which showed non-significant effect of dialogue journal writing on the language use. Puengpipattarakul gave one possible explanation, learners' lack of noticing on the grammars being corrected by the teacher or peers. The researcher also added that due to the fact that dialogue journal focuses on content more than forms, imitation of teachers' forms-focused responses may be ignored by learners. However, Rokni and Seifi (2013, p.63) found significant improvement of EFL learners' grammatical knowledge.

The non-significant improvement of accuracy in the teacher feedback group might possibly be the gap between student-teacher interactions. It was observed throughout the experiment that only few participants asked for grammatical clarification when their journal entries with corrective feedback were given back. Instead of asking the teacher, some asked their peers sitting nearby for clarification.

For the peer feedback group, even though they were equipped with the knowledge of five-grammatical points, only five hours of grammar practice exercise may not be enough for them to master the use of these five-grammar points and give feedback to their peers. Acquisition on forms needs an

amount of contextual exposure to master the language (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p.78). Also the English language knowledge of the Muslim students in this part of Thailand, the participants in this study included, was relatively limited as reflected in the result of the national O-Net scores.

The significance of this study provides an insight in using peers to give feedback on written task as compared to teacher feedback: the traditional way in giving feedback in terms of the language practice training to prepare for effective peer feedback. Another appreciation is the use of peers to create collaborative and active learning environment particularly to the classrooms that consist of large number of students.

Conclusion and suggestion

The result peer feedback led to a significant improvement on the participants' overall writing ability and writing fluency than teacher feedback. However, neither teacher feedback nor peer feedback helped in the improvement of writing accuracy. More research must be done on teacher and peer feedback with participants of Muslim background so that the finding of this study can be confirmed. Remedies and more teaching techniques may be given to Muslim students to help them develop their language accuracy.

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