

Low Proficiency Students' Attitudes toward English Writing, Dialogue Journal Writing and their Willingness to Write in English

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the students' attitudes toward English writing, the use of dialogue journals and examine whether students' willingness to write increased after the use of dialogue journals. Twenty-nine Mattayom Suksa 4 (grade 10) students in an Islamic private school participated in this 14-week study. Each was required to write a journal once a week. The dialogue journal was responded by a peer with a comparable level of English proficiency. Journal entries and three sets of questionnaires were used as instrument for data collection. The students' responses to questionnaire toward English writing, the use of dialogue journal writing (DJW) and their willingness to write were quantitatively analyzed. The results revealed that students had positive attitudes toward writing in English, the use of DJW, and they were more willing to write after the implementation of dialogue journal writing.

Keywords: low proficiency students, English writing, dialogue journal writing, willingness to write

Introduction

Writing is one of the most important skills that must be mastered by first and second language learners (Dueraman, 2012; 2015). Writing provides opportunity for students to express their feelings, opinions, ideas, and thoughts on specific topics and exhibit their knowledge of different contents (Baker, Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Apichatabutra, & Doabler, 2009). To convey the ideas and thoughts effectively, writers need to develop skills and knowledge in unifying ideas and information using complex structures, grammar, and punctuations (Baker et al., 2009). Writing is considered one of the most complex skills to acquire among the four major skills in English (Al_Sawalha & Chow, 2012). Therefore, writing is a challenge for those who have poor background in English language, especially ESL and EFL learners.

In Thai context, according to National Education Act B.E.2542, Thai students study English for twelve years from primary education to secondary education. Yet, most Thai learners are unable to use it effectively (Dueraman, 2012; Noom-ura, 2013). This is evident in the result of the O-NET test (Ordinary National Educational Test) which showed that learners' scores in English, one of the five subjects all Thai students

have to take in order to complete their primary and secondary education, is the lowest compared to the scores of other core subjects in all educational levels (National Institute of Educational Testing Service [NIETS], 2016). Average English scores of Thai primary school students those in Grade 1-6 during 2014-2016 were, from the total of 100, 40.31, 34.59, and 36.34, respectively. The average scores of lower secondary school students were 30.62, 31.80 and 30.45; among 420,000 upper secondary school students taking the test, the average scores were 24.98, 27.76 and 28.31, respectively (NIETS, 2016).

The O-Net scores issue is particularly severe among Islamic private school students in three southern border provinces of Thailand, a majority of whom are Muslims with Malay as their mother tongue. The average English scores of the students of Islamic private schools in the three Southern border provinces are the lowest when compared to the scores of students in the other parts of Thailand. From a total of 100, the average English scores of Islamic private school students were from 30.28, 32.25, and 28.26 during 2014-2016, the lowest score compared to other core subjects (NIETS, 2016).

According to Dhanasobhon (2006, cited in Noom-ura, 2013), the main factors contributing to the high level of failure in teaching and learning English language in Thailand are unqualified and poorly trained teachers, poorly motivated students, mixed-ability learners in a large class, and lack of opportunities for student's exposure to English. Noom-ura's study (2013) on the problems of teaching English language found that teaching writing was ranked the most serious problems by Thai teachers. The researcher suggested that new approaches to teaching writing should be explored in order to enhance EFL learners' writing skills.

Approaches to teaching English writing are one of the factors resulting in students' low performance. Writing pedagogy in Thailand is likely to be traditional method, which student is directed by teacher to learn through memorization and recitation but not developing critical thinking skills, and teacher-centered instruction, when teacher transmits knowledge to students who are passively receiving information (Chiramanee & Kulprasit, 2014; Dueraman, 2012; Noom-ura, 2013). This claim is in line with Shih (1999) asserting that in Asian academic setting writing is typically taught by traditional approaches, comprising of grammar translation, audiolingual, and teacher-centered approach. Teaching writing tends to focus on learning parts of speech, sentence fragments and linking simple into complex sentences, which are significantly less effective than process method (Baker et al., 2009). With such writing approaches, the students are not able to communicate their thoughts through written form of communication that they have learned (Chiramanee & Kulprasit, 2014).

Another cause of Thai students' failure at mastering English writing is the inadequacy of their language knowledge, lack of confidence and opportunity to write (Dueraman, 2012). This may result in their unwillingness to participate in writing tasks, which will make the classroom remain only teacher-centered (Dueraman, 2012).

The students' failure and difficulty in writing in English can be addressed through implementing a writing technique, which can encourage students to explore topics, gather ideas from their own experiences, and use draft and revision in their writing (Reid, 1993, cited in Tanner & Clement, 1997). This technique widely

used in the past decade by ESL teachers is dialogue journals writing (DJW), which has been proved that it can enhance students' writing abilities (Chiramanee & Kulprasit, 2014; Liao & Wong, 2010; Rattanaintanin, 2017).

Dialogue Journals (DJ) is an on-going written conversation performed between a student and teacher who communicate regularly. Students write to the teacher and the teacher responds to students' comments and questions, or asks questions, and also introduces new topics. The teacher's main concerns are not on grammatical correctness of the student's writing (Peyton, 1987), but on writing's quantity and fluency.

Dialogue journals stimulate eloquent on-going conversations in a social environment while students have practice in writing. Students come into a non-threatening atmosphere and non-graded written conversation with a partner in dialogue writing condition. Students also control the amount of content of conversation in the writing (Hail, George, & Hail, 2013; Peyton, 1987).

Dialogue journal writing is expected to provide opportunities for learners to take responsibility of their own language learning and skill development in collaborative learning environment in a student-centered era of teaching and learning (Liao & Wong, 2010; Yoshihara, 2008). Liao and Wong (2010) examined effects of dialogue journal writing on forty-one tenth grader students in Taiwan. The findings showed positive effects of using dialogue journals, which helped improve the students' English writing proficiency in terms of content, organization, and vocabulary, improve students' writing fluency, enhance students' overall reflective awareness, reduce English writing anxiety and increase self-confidence in English writing, and raise intrinsic motivation on English writing. Additionally, students' attitudes toward dialogue journal writing positively increased.

As the nature of dialogue journals is ongoing written conversation between students and partners who could be peers or a teacher, the focus is on social interaction through collaboration between peer-peer and/or student-teacher in the conversation. Vygotsky (1978, p. 90) emphasized the term 'learning' that "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the

process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function". He asserts that cognitive development derives from social interactions from guided learning within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as children and their partners co-construct knowledge. According to Vygotsky (1978 p.86), Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is "the distance between actual development 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." In other words, the difficult skills that students require to master on their own can be done by guidance and encouragement from a knowledgeable partner.

Many studies have also shown that dialogue journal writing helps develop positive attitudes toward writing among learners and increase their willingness to take risk to write (Chiramanee and Kulprasit, 2014; Liao & Wong, 2010; Rattanaintanin, 2017). Studies have shown that an anxiety-free writing context like dialogue journals boosts students' willingness to discover their thinking and manifest their ideas (Hail et al., 2013; Liao & Wong, 2010; Puengpipattrakul, 2014). In dialogue journal writing where the atmosphere is free, teacher and learner interaction is negotiable. The incorporation of forms, contents, contexts, needs and purposes is the most obvious feature of dialogue journal writing, which is a comprehensive approach (Mirhosseini, 2009).

Dialogue journals are widely used in the classroom in different countries nowadays (Hail, et al., 2013; Kim, 2011; Liao & Wong, 2010; Schwarzer, 2004). However, there are relatively few studies on dialogue journals in Thailand. Among these few studies are the ones conducted by Chiramanee and Kulprasit (2014), Rattanaintanin (2017), Pawapatcharaudom (2007), and Puengpipattrakul (2009; 2014). Moreover, most of the studies on dialogue journals focus on student and teacher interaction. Few studies such as Chiramanee and Kulprasit (2014) and Rattanaintanin (2017) have been conducted using peers as a partner in written conversation. Hail et al., (2013) suggest implementing a study of student-student dialogue journal program in the classroom since the results of their study showed that the student-student group freely wanted to write more, in addition to avoid time constraint for a teacher

to respond students' writing.

Thai students are having English writing problems and there have been few studies in Thailand on students' attitudes toward dialogue journals, and also a lack of studies on the effects of dialogue journals toward willingness to write. Therefore, this study is conducted to investigate the use of dialogue journals in helping Thai students, particularly the low proficiency ones, to write in English, and enhancing learners' willingness to write in the dialogue writing practice with their peer as a partner and to examine whether this method of teaching writing works in the context of Thailand and whether it has the effects on their willingness to write.

■ Purposes of the Study

The objectives of this study are to investigate poor students' attitudes toward English writing, the use of dialogue journals, and their willingness to write after the use of dialogue journals. Based on these purposes, this study is undertaken to investigate the following questions:

1. What are the participants' attitudes towards English writing before and after the use of dialogue journals?
2. What are the participants' attitudes toward the use of dialogue journals?
3. Does the use of dialogue journals help increase participants' willingness to write?

■ Research Methodology

1. Participants

The purposive sampling was used for participant selection. The participants were in one of seven classes in the Mattayom 4 (grade 10) in the Islamic private school in Pattani, and were selected based on their O-NET scores of Mattayom 3 (grade 9) taken in 2016. The selected class had the lowest average score, 27.65 out of 100, among seven classes. The participants of this study were 32 Mattayom 4 male students (grade 10). Three participants dropped out before the completion of the study. A total of 29 remained in the study.

2. Instruments

Two sets of instruments were employed in this study: A journal entry and questionnaires.

2.1 Dialogue Journal Entry

Each participant was required to write dialogue journals in the classroom once a week, 30 minutes throughout 14 weeks. The students were encouraged to write on guided topics with unlimited length of content without worrying about grammar accuracy. A list of guided topics was neutral and common to participants. The participants were paired with their friends with a comparable level of English proficiency based on O-NET score. The dialogue journals were read and responded in English by a peer every week. The journal entries were weekly submitted to the teacher.

2.2 Questionnaires

Pre-and post-questionnaires were administered to assess students' attitudes toward English writing, the use of dialogue journal writing, and their willingness to write in English. The questionnaires were adapted from those of Chiramanee and Kulprasit (2014) and Liao and Wong, (2010).

2.2.1 Questionnaire on Writing in English

A questionnaire on writing in English was administered in the pre-study and post-study to find out students' attitudes toward writing in English. The questionnaire consisting of 32 items on attitudes toward writing in English was organized in five point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire on writing in English was analyzed and described using the criteria for interpreting the mean score by Clason and Dormody (1994) as follows: 4.21-5.00=strongly agree (highly positive); 3.41-4.20=agree (positive); 2.61-3.40=moderately agree (neutral); 1.81-2.60=disagree (negative); 1.00-1.80=strongly disagree (highly negative). In order to examine the reliability coefficient of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the items. The overall Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire on writing in English was 0.919, signifying that the questionnaire had high internal consistency.

2.2.2 Questionnaire on the Use of Dialogue Journals

A questionnaire on the participants' attitudes toward the use of dialogue journals consisted of 10 items and was organized in five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The questionnaire was administered after the treatment. According to Clason and Dormody (1994), the mean scores of their responses were interpreted as follows: 4.21-5.00=strongly agree (highly positive); 3.41-4.20=agree (positive); 2.61-3.40=moderately agree (neutral); 1.81-2.60=disagree (negative); 1.00-1.80=strongly disagree (highly negative). Cronbach's alpha was employed to find out the internal consistency of the items. The overall Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire on the use of dialogue journals was 0.824, suggesting that the questionnaire had high internal consistency.

2.2.3 Questionnaire on Willingness to Write

A questionnaire on participants' willingness to write was administered after the implementation of dialogue journals. The questionnaire consisting of 7 items was organized in five point Likert scale ranging from very willing to very unwilling. The questionnaire on willingness to write was analyzed and described according to Clason and Dormody (1994), the mean scores of responses were interpreted as follows: 4.21-5.00=very willing; 3.41-4.20=willing; 2.61-3.40=neutral; 1.81-2.60=unwilling; 1.00-1.80=very unwilling. In order to examine the reliability coefficient of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha was employed to find out the internal consistency of the items. The overall Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire on willingness to write was 0.841, indicating that the questionnaire had high internal consistency.

3. Data Collection Procedures

The study was conducted for 14 weeks. The process was as follows:

3.1 In the beginning of the semester of the academic year 2017 (July-October), the participants completed a questionnaire on their attitudes toward writing in English and that on their willingness to write (Week 1).

3.2 The participants were introduced to purposes of the study and guided on the use of dialogue journal. The students were assigned to write 10 dialogue journals in the class from week 2 to week 13, one dialogue journal per week on a choice of topics provided. The students had freedom to choose their own topic from several guided topics. The students

were paired with those relatively similar O-NET score so that they would feel comfortable to write and respond in English to each other. Each student gave responses to the partner's writing back and forth. The dialogue journals with peer response took place in the classroom. Each piece of journal was submitted to the researcher who was their teacher responsible for the English class. Grammar in the students' journals was not corrected and graded. However, the data of students' grammatical errors commonly found were collected by the researcher and presented to the participants every three-week period so that they learned to improve their writing skills.

3.3 In week 14 after 12-week period of dialogue journal writing, the students were asked to take three sets of questionnaires on English writing, attitudes

toward the use of dialogue journal, and their willingness to write after implementing dialogue journals again.

4. Data Analysis

The scores on the five-point scale in pre-and post-questionnaires on English writing were analyzed by a paired sample t-test and the scores of both questionnaires on the use of dialogue journals and their willingness to write were analyzed by descriptive statistics and a t-test

Findings

1. Participants' Attitudes toward Writing in English

The results of the participants' responses and the detailed items of their responses to the questionnaire on writing in English are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1 Participants' Attitudes toward English Writing Before and After the Study

Pre-study			Post-study			Mean Diff	t-value	Sig.(2-tailed)
Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level			
3.51	.603	Positive	3.78	.519	Positive	0.27	-2.663	.013*

*p<.05

Table 1 shows the pre-study mean score of participants' attitudes toward writing in English was 3.51 out of 5, (S.D.=.603) while the post-study mean score of their attitudes toward writing in English significantly increased to 3.78 (S.D.=.519, t=-2.663,

p<.05). This shows that the participants developed significantly more positive attitudes toward English writing after the use of dialogue journals, indicating that dialogue journals helped improve their attitudes toward writing.

Table 2 Detailed items of Participants' Attitudes toward English Writing Before and After the Study

Item No.	Statements	Pre-test			Post-test			t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level		
2	I enjoy writing in English.	3.41	1.083	Positive	4.11	.974	Positive	-3.425	.002**
22	I like to write even if my writing will not be graded.	2.89	1.219	Neutral	3.67	1.038	Positive	-3.314	.003**
1	I like English writing because I can express my ideas.	3.37	.629	Neutral	3.93	.829	Positive	-2.964	.006**
6	I am good at writing in English.	2.74	.813	Neutral	3.22	.751	Neutral	-2.675	.013*
18	I like classes that require a lot of writing.	3.30	1.068	Neutral	3.89	.934	Positive	-2.672	.013*

Table 2 Detailed items of Participants' Attitudes toward English Writing Before and After the Study

Item No.	Statements	Pre-test			Post-test			t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level		
32	I want others to read my writing in English.	3.30	1.171	Neutral	3.85	1.167	Positive	-2.308	.029*
21	I like to write down what happen in my daily life in English.	2.56	.974	Negative	3.15	1.322	Neutral	-2.254	.033*
12	I think I have sufficient English knowledge to write easily.	3.11	1.155	Neutral	3.59	.844	Positive	-2.164	.040*
25	I look forward to writing in English.	3.19	1.111	Neutral	3.67	.679	Positive	-2.105	.045*
14	I am satisfied with my writing work/ topic in English.	3.33	1.109	Neutral	3.89	1.050	Positive	-2.068	.049*
27	I am not worried about grammar when writing in English.	3.19	1.111	Neutral	3.67	1.038	Positive	-2.050	.051*
15	I think writing in English is important in my future career.	4.63	.629	Highly positive	4.26	.903	Highly Positive	1.845	.076
20	I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas when writing in English.	2.96	.940	Neutral	3.41	1.083	Positive	-1.623	.117
23	I am motivated to write in English in my classes.	3.37	1.079	Neutral	3.81	1.075	Positive	-1.564	.130
9	I gather my ideas before writing in English.	3.52	.893	Positive	3.78	.847	Positive	-1.369	.183
24	I enjoy writing assignments that challenge me.	3.37	1.115	Neutral	3.70	.775	Positive	-1.363	.185
19	Practicing writing is a very pleasant experience.	3.74	1.130	Positive	4.11	.847	Positive	-1.308	.202
5	Writing in English is fun.	3.63	1.079	Positive	3.93	1.141	Positive	-1.247	.223
26	I am ready to write when my teacher assigns a writing activity.	3.44	1.188	Positive	3.74	1.023	Positive	-1.114	.275
10	I am ready to write in English whenever I want to.	3.15	1.099	Neutral	3.37	.967	Neutral	-1.063	.297
7	When I have trouble about grammar in my writing, I still keep writing.	3.74	1.095	Positive	4.00	.877	Positive	-1.045	.306
30	Writing to communicate in English is fun.	4.19	1.001	Positive	4.00	1.000	Positive	.926	.363

Table 2 Detailed items of Participants' Attitudes toward English Writing Before and After the Study

Item No.	Statements	Pre-test			Post-test			t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	S.D.	Level	Mean	S.D.	Level		
16	I think practicing English writing can develop my English writing skill.	4.19	.879	Positive	4.04	.940	Positive	.679	.503
28	I give my best effort when writing in English.	3.93	.917	Positive	3.78	1.013	Positive	.660	.515
4	English writing skill is important to me.	3.96	1.055	Positive	4.07	.781	Positive	-.462	.648
3	I think that learning writing is important.	4.33	1.000	Highly Positive	4.44	.847	Highly Positive	-.440	.663
31	I would take English writing courses even if they are not compulsory.	3.70	1.068	Positive	3.78	1.219	Positive	-.337	.739
17	I practice writing in order to improve my writing skills.	3.93	.917	Positive	3.85	1.064	Positive	.303	.764
29	I want to write in English outside classroom.	3.48	1.221	Positive	3.56	1.121	Positive	-.296	.769
11	I organize my thought before writing in English.	3.44	.751	Positive	3.48	1.122	Positive	-.238	.814
13	I am satisfied with my English writing ability.	3.37	1.275	Neutral	3.33	1.000	Neutral	.205	.839
8	Although I don't know vocabulary, I still want to write.	3.81	1.039	Positive	3.85	.770	Positive	-.182	.857
	Average	3.51	.603	Positive	3.78	.519	Positive	-2.663	.013*

**p<.01, *p<.05

In Table 2, the detailed items were rearranged according the significant increase. The result illustrates the mean scores of the participants' responses to each item of the questionnaire before and after the use of dialogue journals. The pre-study mean scores ranged from 2.56, negative, to 4.63, highly positive, while the result of the post-study mean scores ranged from 3.15, neutral, to 4.44, highly positive. This shows more positive attitudes toward English writing after practicing dialogue journals.

The detailed analysis shows that significant improvement were found in 11 out of 32 items after the use of dialogue journal writing. Among the 11 items,

the mean scores of three items significantly increased at p<.01. That is, the participants enjoyed writing in English (item 2, t=-3.425) and they could express their ideas (item 1, t=-2.964). Moreover, dialogue journals encouraged them to write even if their writing would not be graded (item 22, t=-3.314). The level of attitudes of the participants towards the statements in 3 items was positive after the use of dialogue journals.

Eight items significantly increased at p<.05. Six out of eight items significantly increased from neutral to highly positive attitudes. The participants thought they had sufficient English knowledge to write easily (item 12, t=-2.164), and were satisfied with their writing

work/topic in English (item 14, $t=-2.068$). They liked classes that require a lot of writing (item 18, $t=-2.672$), and looked forward to it (item 25, $t=-2.105$). Additionally, they were not worried about grammar when writing in English (item 27, $t=-2.050$) and they preferred others to read their writing in English (item 32, $t=-2.308$)

An item shows a neutral level of attitudes in both pre-study and post-study toward the statement that the participants were good at writing in English; however, the mean scores significantly increased from 2.74 to 3.22 (item 6, $t=-2.675$). In the last item, the mean scores significantly increased from 2.56 to 3.15. Despite having negative attitude in the pre-study toward

the statement that the participants liked to write down what happens in my daily life in English, they showed the neutral level of attitudes in the post-study (item 21, $t=-2.254$). In conclusion, it can be said that the dialogue journals can help boost the participants' attitudes toward writing in English.

2. Participants' Attitudes toward the Use of Dialogue Journals Writing

The results of participants' responses to the questionnaire on the attitudes toward the use of dialogue journals are shown in the Table 3 below.

Table 3 Participants' Attitudes toward Dialogue Journals

Item No.	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Level of attitudes
3	I like dialogue journals because I have freedom to write whatever I want.	4.00	.877	Positive
10	I like dialogue journals when my friend reads and responds to my writing.	3.85	.907	
4	I like dialogue journals because I don't have to worry about writing quality.	3.78	.847	
9	I like dialogue journals because they make English writing more fun.	3.78	1.013	
2	I like dialogue journals because I can choose my own writing topic.	3.74	.859	
1	I like dialogue journals because I can express my ideas freely.	3.70	.823	
5	I like dialogue journals because my English writing will not be marked.	3.63	1.043	
8	I like dialogue journals because they improve my language ability.	3.59	.931	
6	I like dialogue journals because I don't have to worry about grammatical errors.	3.56	1.013	
7	I like dialogue journals because I can exchange journals with my friend.	3.44	.892	
	Average	3.71	.529	

As shown in the table 3, the overall participants' responses to dialogue journals shows that they were positive (mean=3.71). The mean scores of all 10 items ranged from 3.44 to 4.00, showing their level of positive attitudes toward the use dialogue journal writing.

The table shows the participants' positive attitudes toward the use of dialogue journals because of various advantages of the dialogue journals. They had freedom to write whatever they wanted (item 3, \bar{x} =4.00) and they liked when their friend read and responded to their writing (item 10, \bar{x} =3.85). Dialogue journals helped them not to worry about writing quality (item 4, \bar{x} =3.78) and made English writing more fun (item 9, \bar{x} =3.78). Through dialogue journals, the participants

could choose their own writing topic (item 2, \bar{x} =3.74) as well as express their ideas freely (item 1, \bar{x} =3.70) without their English writing being marked (item 5, \bar{x} =3.63). In addition, they liked dialogue journals because they could improve their language ability (item 8, \bar{x} =3.59) while they did not have to worry about grammatical errors (item 6, \bar{x} =3.56) and they could exchange journals with friend (item 7, \bar{x} =3.44).

3. Willingness to Write

The results of participants' response to the questionnaire on their willingness to write after the use of the dialogue journals are demonstrated in the table 4 below.

Table 4 Participants' Willingness to Write after the Use of Dialogue Journals

Item No.	Statements	Mean	S.D.	Level of Willingness
7	I am willing to take notes in English.	4.00	.832	
4	I am willing to write in English whether there are grammatical errors.	3.96	1.018	
5	I am willing to read and respond to my friend English writing.	3.89	.847	
2	I am willing to write journals in English.	3.85	.818	Willing
6	I am willing to write down what happens in my daily life in English.	3.85	.662	
3	I am willing to write dialogue journal outside classroom.	3.78	.847	
1	I am willing to practice my English writing.	3.74	1.023	
	Average	3.92	.745	Willing

Table 4 indicates that the participants were willing to write after the practice of dialogue journal for 14 weeks. The total score was 3.92 out of 5. After implementing dialogue journals in the classroom, the participants expressed their willingness to write in English.

All items ranged from 3.74-4.00 out of 5, which indicated that the participants exhibited a willing level to write in all aspects after the use of dialogue. The participants were willing to take notes (item 7, \bar{x} =4.00) and write in English regardless of grammatical errors (item 4, \bar{x} =3.96) as well as to read and response to

their friends' English writing (item 5, \bar{x} =3.89). They were also willing to write journals (item 2, \bar{x} =3.85) and write down what happened in their daily life in English (item 6, \bar{x} =3.85). In addition to writing dialogue journal outside classroom (item 3, \bar{x} =3.78), they were willing to practice their English writing (item 1, \bar{x} =3.74).

Summary and Discussions

This present study aimed to examine the attitudes of low proficiency students toward writing in English, the implementation of dialogue journals and their

willingness to write after the use of dialogue journals. The main findings based on the three research questions can be summarized as follows.

1. The results revealed that the participants' attitudes toward English writing were positive before the treatment. Their attitudes increased significantly after the implementation of dialogue journals because they were able to express their ideas and they enjoyed this activity. They also preferred to write in English about what happened in their daily life in English as well as preferred the class that does a lot of writing. This may result from the fact that dialogue journal is a free writing that does not mainly focus on grammatical correction, and it is a kind of anxiety-free activity. The present study also revealed that even if their writing would not be graded, the participants preferred to write in English. The finding supports those of Liao and Wong (2010) and Mansor, Shafie, Maesin, Nayan and Osman (2011) as well as the study of Holguin, Culderon, and Novoa (2013) which confirmed a similar result that using dialogue journal enable EFL learners to express their feelings, ideas, thoughts, and opinions. The present study also reviewed the grammatical aspects every three-week period in order to avoid the interruption of learning process of dialogue journal writing and lessen the participants' worry about grammatical accuracy in writing.

2. The results showed the participants' positive attitudes toward the use of dialogue journals. The participants like dialogue journals because they were given freedom to write and they enjoyed when someone read and responded to their writing. Since dialogue journal is a channel of reciprocal communication between peers, their exchanges are perceived as genuine conversation. Additionally, dialogue journals support Vygotsky's (1978) notion on Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that learning accelerates through collaboration and assistance. As a result, dialogue journals enrich an anxiety-free atmosphere in English EFL writing classes and the participants found writing and peer feedback less apprehensive. This supports those previous studies by Kulpasit and Chiramanee (2012) as well as Puengpipattrakul (2009) which indicated that the participants recognized the significance of journal writing with peer feedback. This can be endorsed to the value of teaching and

using peer-to-peer dialogue journals in the writing classroom.

3. The result indicated that after the use of dialogue journal writing, the participants were willing to write in English. Interestingly, they were willing to share, to read, and to respond to the peer's writing even though their writing was not grammatically correct. This implies that the participants felt more comfortable in writing after the practice of dialogue journal writing as it has a focus content rather than grammatical accuracy. This result is in line with the study of Liao and Wong (2010) showing that learners are willing to take risk to write as it is a non-threatening free topic writing. The participants were willing to take notes and write down in English and to write outside classroom. Mansor, et al. (2011) also asserted that dialogue journals could create desire for learners to practice writing and to learn their language outside classroom.

In conclusion, the result of this study shows that dialogue journals can be applied to low proficiency students that they had positive attitudes on writing in English and the use of dialogue journals, as well as they exhibited their willingness to write in English. Dialogue journals have also been proved to be a non-threatening and free writing activity that does not focus on grammatical correctness. The use of dialogue journals helped improve students' attitudes toward writing in English and their willingness to write. Therefore, dialogue journal writing can be used as a tool to develop English writing of poor students in ESL/EFL writing classes.

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