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A Comparison of Teacher's and Senior Students' Feedback: Student Attitudes and Their Writing Improvement

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Based on the concepts of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), this study compared the effects of feedback given from teacher and senior students on Thai EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' writing. The research participants were 33 students majoring in English who were undertaking an English Essay Writing Course and 22 senior students who have already passed the course. The data were collected from a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, a group discussion, and the students' writing drafts. The results showed that students found the senior feedback helpful to improve their writing drafts, and they felt comfortable to receive feedback from senior students; however, they had low confidence towards the comments. With regards to teacher comments, students found them helpful to raise their awareness in terms of tenses, grammar, and structure. However, the limitations of teacher feedback were pointed out in terms of confusing comments, stress, and timing. Finally, the analysis of the effects of feedback types on students' improvements showed that metalinguistic corrective feedback (CF) made by both teacher and senior students led to most of the effective corrections. Based on the findings, the implications and directions for future research will be discussed.

Keywords: Writing in an EFL Learning Context, Zone of Proximal Development, Teacher's Feedback, Senior Students' Feedback, English Essay Writing

Introduction

English has become the dominant global language in this era in regards to economics and political situation, and is currently one of the major requirements set for recruiting staff in many professions. To respond to this trend, different countries have adjusted their educational system to foster the production of graduates who have sufficient language skills as required by the industrial sectors or job markets. In Thailand, the latest national education plan has put the emphasis on extending education opportunities for students by encouraging schools to train their students to become independent learners, who continue their education for life-long and learn eagerly in a borderless world (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Even though there have been changes in the directions of educational system in Thailand, English language skills have long been the problem for many Thai students (Foley, 2005; Pipattarasakul & Singhasiri, 2018; Sermsook, Liamnimitr & Pochakorn, 2017*)*. Evidence could be seen from the relatively low Ordinary National Educational Test (ONET) mean scores of English for Thai students in the record of five years*:* 27.76, 24.98, 23.44, 25.35, and 22.13 % from year 2012 to 2016, respectively (National Institute of Educational Testing Service, 2017*)*. Thailand is one of the most popular tourist destinations, yet there has always been only one official language (i.e.*,* Thai); and English as a global language remains a foreign language. This means that English can be at most the first foreign language that students can learn at schools, resulting in students having limited exposure to English both for academic and daily-life

basis (Sermsook et al., 2007) and having a low level of English proficiency.

When compared with other skills (speaking, listening and reading), writing is identified by many students as the most difficult skill to master (Chaisiri, 2010; Fang & Wang, 2011; Sermsook et al., 2007; Tangpermpoon, 2008*)*. This could be due to a number of reasons, e.g*.,* students' limited knowledge of the linguistic terms used in the writing course (Rayupsri & Kongpetch, 2014; Sermsook et al., 2017; Sritrakarn, in press), the heavy focus on form and traditional method of classroom teaching (Kulprasit & Chiramanee, 2013), mother tongue interference (Chanakan & Tongpoon-Patanasorn, 2016), or inadequate knowledge of grammar structure and organization of ideas (Rayupsri & Kongpetch, 2014). To promote good writing, it requires the writers to have a great deal of lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as principles of organization in the second language (L2- Tangpermpoon, 2008). Especially for EFL learner groups, different guidance and supports are needed to help students better write in English. One of the common ways is through the use of cooperative learning activities, in particular a peer feedback activity- by setting up a task which requires them to analyze or assess their peers' work and provide feedback for writing improvement. Fahimi and Rahimi (2015), Omelicheva (2005), Ruegg (2014, 2015), Salteh and Sadeghi (2015), and Wanchid (2015) employed the peer feedback activity. These previous studies have claimed that it could enhance students' language learning, especially writing skills. Researchers who have employed the peer feedback activity in the writing classroom have pointed out both of its benefits and drawbacks. While the activity could be helpful in terms of promoting autonomous learning, raising students' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses (e.g., Fahimi & Rahimi, 2015; Omelicheva, 2005), and creating a comfortable learning environment (Ruegg, 2015); the application of this activity could be limited for EFL learner groups as students may be used to the traditional way of learning where they are assessed and guided by the teacher (Fahimi & Rahimi, 2015). Moreover, some students could have limited experiences of language to comment on the work, so they lack confidence to give feedback (Wanchid, 2015). The limited experience of students could hinder their learning achievement through the peer feedback activity.

Despite its limitations, peer feedback activities can still be useful (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris, 1999); and to overcome those limitations, the present study implemented the concept of peer feedback activity while replacing 'peers' with 'senior students' who have already undertaken the course and should have sufficient experiences to provide feedback. This study therefore investigated the effects of using senior students' feedback activity in a writing classroom and compared students' attitudes toward the teacher's and senior students' feedback. This study aimed to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the types of feedback frequently used by the teacher and senior students?
2. What are student attitudes toward the teacher's and senior students' feedback?
3. Which are the types of teacher's or senior students' feedback that help to improve students' writing?

Literature Review

Writing in an EFL Learning Context

Writing is an action- a process of discovering and organizing your ideas, putting them on paper, and reshaping and revising (Meyers, 2005). It is a cognitive-linguistic activity which requires higher-order thinking skills (Jennifer & Ponniah, 2017) and both syntactic and semantic knowledge (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013) to accomplish. For this reason, writing is often a problem for students at the higher education level regardless of any location contexts.

In the native speaking context, Riazi and Spinks (2017) conducted a survey asking first-year university students to make a report of their writing problems when composing the university assignments. The study found that the common writing problems of students included lexical-grammatical problems and rhetorical structure. In the English as a Second Language (ESL) context, Maarof, Yamat and Li (2011)

argue that the ability to write in English among ESL learners in Malaysia is generally unsatisfactory because they have less language knowledge and confidence compared to writers writing in English as a first or native language. In support of this, the study of Salteh and Sadeghi (2015), which investigated teachers' and students' opinions on error correction, found that ESL students' writing problems included organization errors, grammatical errors, and contents or ideas errors. In an EFL learning context, Wanchid (2015) argues that the main writing problems of students include illogical organization of ideas, incorrect language use, and incoherent sentences. The discussion reflects the common writing problems of students in the three contexts of learning which include grammar, language use, writing organization, and organization of ideas or coherence.

Similar problems were also found in the context of investigation. Seetrakarn (2017), for example, investigated the opinions of Thai EFL teachers after making assessment of students' essay writing, and found that students have problems in terms of grammar and language structure, logic reasoning, and vocabulary. Recent research studies have shed light on possible reasons for writing problems of Thai students. Kulprasit and Chiramanee (2013) argue that writing instruction in Thailand is offered under the traditional approach. Other studies (e.g., Sritrakarn, in press) reported that the L1 is the dominating language for classroom communication, while Sermsook et al. (2007) claim that Thai students have limited opportunities to use English outside of class. These circumstances could impede students' learning and understanding of the lesson, and it is therefore essential that the writing teachers seek ways to help students improve their writing.

As far as the writing process is concerned, Kellogg (1996) takes a broad perspective and describes it under three main steps: formation (preparing and identifying ideas), execution (writing the draft) and monitoring (revising, editing and writing the new draft). Oshima and Hogues (2017) further explain this in more detail by proposing six main steps of writing, namely: pre-write the ideas (collecting information), organize your ideas (selecting and sorting ideas), write the first draft, revise the draft (reviewing the contents and organization), edit and proofread the draft, and write a new draft.

As writing is a complicated process which involves the writer polishing and reshaping the drafts, it is important that the teacher provides support and intervention along the editing process. When considering the writing processes above, the stages which allow for an intervention as proposed by Oshima and Hogue is "Step 4: revise the draft" and the "monitoring" stage in Kellogg's. At these stages, students can submit their work to the teacher or their peers or senior students for comments or feedback before they edit the work again and submit the final drafts.

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)

Giving feedback is one of the important methods in helping students improve their writing drafts. When the readers who provide feedback on writing act as an audience and communicate to the writer which parts are unclear or difficult to follow, the situation is called "giving feedback" (Ruegg, 2015, p. 131). Scholars define written corrective feedback (WCF) as "an indication to the learners that his or her use of the target language is incorrect" (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 172).

Previous studies have both supported and argued against the benefits of feedback. Truscott (1996, 2007) has made an argument against corrective feedback by questioning the practicality of grammar correction and stating that it is harmful to students. Later research studies have been conducted in response to the claim of Truscot (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Ferris, 1999; Hattie, Biggs & Purdue, 1996; Lee, 2017). Hyland and Hyland (2006) argue that feedback alone may not be responsible for improvement in language accuracy, it however is a central aspect of ESL/ EFL writing programs across the world. For this reason, feedback is important, and teachers should not ignore their students' linguistic difficulties (Ferris, 1999). In support of this, scholars claim that feedback can be very powerful (Hattie et al., 1996), and it has become an essential part of even a supervisor's role in professional training (Ellis & Loughland, 2017).

Scholars have proposed different strategies for indicating students' writing problems. Ellis (2008)

suggests that the types of CF should be distinguished systematically by taking two perspectives: the teacher's provision of CF and the students' response to this feedback.

Taking the first perspective, Ellis (2008) has identified six strategies for correcting linguistic errors in students' written work, namely: direct CF, indirect CF, metalinguistic CF, the form of the feedback, electronic CF, and reformulation. *Direct CF* is when the teacher provides the student with the correct form. *Indirect CF* is when the teacher indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction. There are two types of indirect CF: indicating + locating the error (underlining and the use of cursers to show omissions in the student's text) and indication only (an indication in the margin that an error or errors have taken place in a line of text). *Metalinguistic CF* is when the teacher provides some kind of metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error. Metalinguistic CF consists of two types: use of error codes (the teacher writes codes in the margin, e.g., ww = wrong word; art = article) and brief grammatical descriptions (the teacher numbers errors in the text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text). *The focus of the feedback* concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the students' errors or selects one or two specific types of errors to correct. There are two types of this option: unfocused CF (the teacher elects to correct all of the students' errors) and focused CF (the teacher selects specific error types for correction). *Electronic feedback* is when the teacher indicates an error and provides a hyperlink to a concordance file that provides examples of correct usage. *Reformulation* consists of a native speaker's reworking of the students' entire text to make the language seem as native-like as possible while keeping the content of the original intact.

Taking the second perspective, corrective feedback can also be provided by focusing on students' responses which can be categorized as: *revision required* (CF requiring students to edit their errors) and *no revision required* (students are either asked to study corrections or just given back corrected text).

Different findings have been shared by previous studies using the above strategies. Bangert-Drowns et al. (1991) claim that the types of feedback which lead to more learning benefits should be those that require students to work further to correct their drafts. This way of providing feedback is explained under the concept of "research availability" (i.e., teacher providing low "research availability" to influence students to actively search for more information and edit their work while learning along the process.) With regards to the focus of feedback, Tang (2016), who examined the effectiveness of feedback; argues that feedback for L2 learners should be clear and informative as the similar mistakes may recur constantly. Moreover, Hattie et al. (1996) claim that feedback will only be effective when specific information is provided.

In an EFL learning context, Sanavi and Nemati (2014) examined the effects of CF strategies on the writing ability of Iranian learners and found that reformulation strategy was the most effective one. Robb, Ross and Shortreed (1986) examined the writing quality of EFL learners after receiving CF in four different ways: correction (papers were completely corrected), coded CF (errors marked in an abbreviated code), uncoded CF (errors marked with a yellow-text marking pen), and marginal CF (the marker of errors per line were tallied and written in the margins of the student's paper). Rob and colleagues (1986) claim that CF on sentence-level mechanics may not be helpful to students. The teacher should instead respond to more important aspects of student writing with comments that force the writer back to the initial stages of composing to reshape their writing (Rob et al, 1986).

Based on the context of the present study, student participants were EFL learners who were learning how to write their essay in English and students had to go through different stages to revise and edit the use of language to express their ideas. Various kinds of feedback and comments which make different focus on errors are therefore important to help them improve their writing, and the framework which responds to this need is that proposed by Ellis (2008), taking the perspective of teacher's provision of CF.

Teachers' and Senior Students' Feedback

Commonly, writing feedback is provided by either teacher or peer. Teacher feedback involves the written responses provided by the teacher to the students' writing. These responses are limited to

comments on grammatical errors and content of the students' writing (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). Peer feedback is a writing activity in which writers work in groups collaboratively and provide opinions on each other's writing (Wanchid, 2015).

Previous studies have pointed out both benefits and drawbacks of teachers and peer feedback. Chaudron (1984) claims that teacher feedback is informative. Maarof et al. (2011) examined students' perceptions toward receiving feedback from teacher, peer, and teacher-peer and claimed that teacher feedback can lead to self-efficacy and peer feedback helps to raise more awareness. The study of Maarof and colleagues (2011), however, argue that students need a combination of feedback from both teacher and peers. Ruegg (2014, 2015) compared the uptake of peer and teacher longitudinal feedback after Japanese students received only one of these sources and found that teacher feedback is precise, leads to more revision, and increases writing self-efficacy; however, teacher feedback could lead to misunderstanding and unsuccessful revisions. Ruegg (2015) observed that peer feedback leads to more revision attempts and creates autonomous learning. Students feel more comfortable to follow up and ask for clarification after receiving peer feedback; they therefore find it more supportive. However, peer feedback is sometimes unclear (Ruegg, 2015). The limitations of peer feedback are also discussed in the study by Wanchid (2015) who investigated Thai EFL students' preferences for self-correction, paper-pencil peer feedback, and the integration of Facebook and peer feedback. Wanchid points out the limitations of peer feedback in terms of students' knowledge of language and grammar; and that students tend to be inclined by the culture of face preservation, so their comments are more compromising, resulting in the quality of comments being less effective.

The discussion implies that feedback from teacher and students can bring both benefits and drawbacks depending on "the nature of the feedback and the context in which it is given" (Brookart, 2009, p. 1). To add to the findings of previous studies, the present study employed the senior students' feedback activity in a writing classroom to support the junior students in their English essay writing. The study is based on the concept of zone of proximal development and the discussion of this follows.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

ZPD is the approach developed by psychologist Lev Vygotsky meaning "the distance between the actual developmental levels 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). According to Vygotsky, learning management should be done by considering two levels of learner development: the actual development and potential development. When students make an effort to move from what they have already learnt to the new knowledge or skills (what is not known), the space between these two levels is called zone of proximal development. Figure 1 below demonstrates the location of ZPD.
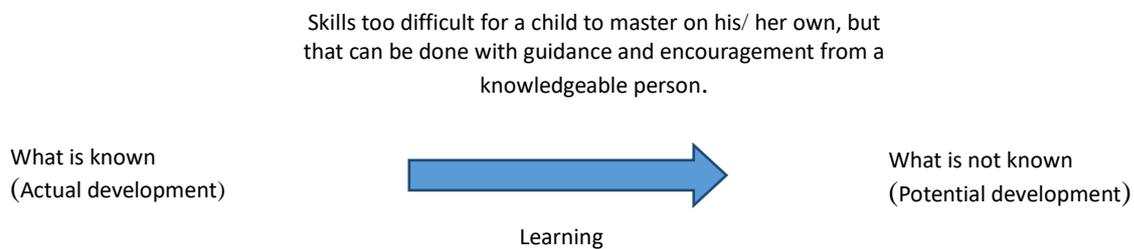

Figure 1. Zone of Proximal Development (adapted from McLeod, 2012).

An example of the learning environment which allows for ZPD is when a learner, who can already multiply single-digit numbers on his own, can multiply two-digit numbers with guidance from adults or teachers. Meanwhile, this student gets frustrated when multiplying the two-digit numbers by himself. This situation implies that when working on the task with the assistance of experienced adults, the student

could refine knowledge, and build up further from his existing knowledge of being able to multiply one-digit numbers to trying out two-digit numbers. The guidance from adults helps to increase his knowledge and understanding, resulting in the student being capable of multiplying the two-digit numbers independently later on.

The two types of learning administration which have the influence from ZPD are scaffolding and cooperative learning. Scaffolding refers to the way in which teachers create new learning tasks and activities at a level slightly beyond their students' current knowledge and provide enough modeling and clues of how their students may approach them (Phakiti, 2017). An example of scaffolding is the situation where the student was learning how to multiply two-digit numbers above. Cooperative learning includes the situation where students work together to accomplish the task. This could be done by sharing or exchanging ideas, communicating with or supporting each other. The present study follows the concept of ZPD, in particular cooperative learning and investigates the effects of using senior students' feedback activity to help students improve their essay writing. Further details regarding the context of the study and research participants will be discussed in the methodology section below.

Methodology

The Participants

This research study was conducted at a Thai university in the first semester of academic year 2017. The research participants included two groups of students majoring in English: 22 fourth -year students who acted as reviewers of the writing drafts and provided feedback; and 33 third-year students who submitted their work for writing improvements. The senior group had already passed the English Essay Writing Course while the junior students were undertaking it. Table 1 below summarizes the basic information of the two groups of participants.

TABLE 1
Background of the Participants

	Senior group	Junior group
Age	20-22	19-21
Gender	Male = 3 Female = 19	Male = 6 Female = 27
Level of English proficiency	Intermediate – Upper Intermediate	Lower Intermediate-Intermediate
Past courses relevant to writing	English Essay Writing A = 3 B+ = 9 B = 14 C+ = 3 C = 2 D+ = 2	Paragraph Writing A = 1 B+ = 2 B = 4 C+ = 3 C = 7 D+ = 5
Course undertaking	Persuasive Writing	English Essay Writing

The Course

The English Essay Writing Course is one of the major courses compulsory for students majoring in English at the context of investigation. Students enroll in the first semester of their third year with the requirements that they have to pass the Paragraph Writing Course prior to the enrolment. The English Essay Writing Course aims to prepare students for writing at the text level, studying essay types and structure, preparing drafts and outlines, and using appropriate language consistent with the type of essay and its goals. The course contents are presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2
The Contents of the English Essay Writing Course

Unit	Contents
1	Fundamental elements for an English essay writing - noun group, nominalization and reference nouns - generating ideas (listing ideas & mind mapping)
2	Revision of paragraph structure
3	Writing an argumentative essay
	Midterm Examination
4	Argumentative essay with a counter argument
5	Cohesion & coherence
6	Using interpersonal metadiscoursal markers: hedges, certainty markers, attributes, attitudes markers & commentaries
	Final Examination

Data Collection Process

This mixed-method research study attempted to improve students' essay writing through the teacher's and senior students' feedback activity. The data collection process followed the steps below.

Design of questionnaires and interview questions

There were two sets of questionnaires used in this study to investigate the attitudes of the senior and junior students. The two questionnaires were designed to elicit the students' responses regarding their opinions toward the senior students' and teacher's feedback, and both consisted of three main parts. The first part contained the students' demographic data. The second part was composed of statements with Likert scales (1-5) eliciting their levels of agreement to reflect their opinions while the third part included open-ended questions asking the students' attitudes toward the benefits and drawbacks of the teacher's and senior students' feedback.

The quality of the questionnaires was initially assessed by four experts in the field and edited before being pilot-tested with small groups of similar candidates to ensure that there was no ambiguity in the questionnaire items. Piloting resulted in some changes in wording of some of the items. Then, the reliability of the final questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach's alpha version 11.5. According to Srisatitnarakoon (2007), the questionnaire reliability can be estimated by locating the results on the scales of 0 to +1. If the level of reliability gets close to zero, it means that the questionnaire has poor quality, and if the assessed value gets close to one; the level of reliability is high. In this study, the reliabilities of the two sets of questionnaires for senior and junior students calculated through the Cronbach's alpha were 0.77 and 0.82, which means that they were both reliable and could be used for data collection. The interview and group discussion questions were mainly to follow up on some of the students' responses and their further comments based on the activity (e.g., why students have a lack of confidence in senior feedback or their reasons for feeling stressed after receiving teacher feedback).

Design of essay topics

To ensure that the topics were of interest for students, they were voted in the classroom prior to the beginning of the first draft of each topic. Eventually, the four topics for students to compose their essays were: *schools or universities shouldn't abolish exams and testing; is cloning good or bad?; should plastic surgery be acceptable?; and should same sex marriage be legalized?*

Training

Prior to the data collection, the two groups of students were trained for the important codes to be used in the feedback. Different types of codes and feedback were obtained from previous studies (e.g., Ellis, 2008; Oshima & Hogue, 2017), and used to revise students' knowledge of feedback codes. In addition, the senior students were trained in knowledge of an English essay structure and necessary language features and explained how to provide useful and constructive feedback. Different types of feedback were introduced to students together with examples and guidelines of the areas to base the feedback on. The training lasted 6 hours (3 hours for the essay writing revision and 3 hours for feedback types).

Dividing students

After students have learnt the contents up to Unit 4, the class was divided into two groups: group A and group B for the purpose of draft submission. The two groups of students would take turns to submit their drafts to the teacher and senior students for feedback. Eventually, each group would submit two topics to the teacher and the other two to seniors. Table 3 below summarizes the organization of the teacher's and senior students' feedback activity in this study.

TABLE 3
The Submission of Writing Drafts for the Teacher's and Senior Students' Feedback

Topic	Submission	
	Teacher	Seniors
1: Schools or universities shouldn't abolish exams and testing	Group A	Group B
2: Is cloning good or bad?	Group B	Group A
3: Should plastic surgery be acceptable?	Group A	Group B
4: Should same sex marriage be legalized?	Group B	Group A

The senior feedback activity was organized under teacher supervision, and students in both groups were told that they could always consult the teacher if they were not certain how to provide (senior students) or follow the feedback (junior students).

Questionnaire distribution and semi-structured interview

After students had composed all four topics assigned, questionnaires were distributed to both the senior and junior groups to investigate their opinions toward the activity. In case of some interesting responses, semi-structured interviews and a group discussion were also arranged.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data collected in this study was administered in three different ways. Firstly, the data from the Likert scale section were calculated for average mean scores of opinions and standard deviation (S.D.) to identify the amount of variation of a set of data value, and the t-test values were calculated to identify the significance level of the students' responses to the questionnaire. Student responses in the open-ended section were tallied and calculated in percentages. The information received from semi-structured interviews as well as a group discussion was used to support the quantitative findings, and the teacher's and senior students' feedback types were analysed by adapting the framework from Ellis (2008), the teacher's provision of CF.

As previously discussed, Ellis has proposed six main kinds of CF. When considering the goals and nature of the present study (i.e., focusing on linguistic errors), the appropriate types of feedback which could be applied in the analysis of this study included options 1-3 (direct CF, indirect CF, and

metalinguistic CF). Besides, there were other types of feedback made by the teacher or seniors which did not fit in any of the three options set by Ellis (2008). These included compliments, questions to the writers regarding the contents, criticism of the writing, or some comments in general of how the essay could be better written. This study therefore adapted the three options of feedback types from Ellis (2008), and added option four (comments) to cover the feedback which could not fit in options 1 - 3. The comments included CF from teacher and senior students which provided reflective information for the purposes of criticizing, questioning, guiding, or complimenting the writing of students.

Findings

This section discusses the research findings, based on the three research questions set above**.**

What are the Types of Feedback Frequently Used by the Teacher and Senior Students?

In this study, 249 pieces of writing drafts were collected (124 received feedback from the teacher, 125 received feedback from senior students). The frequencies of different types of feedback used by the teacher and seniors are as shown in Table 4 below.

TABLE 4
The Frequencies of Different Types of Feedback Used by the Teacher and Senior Students

Feedback types		Teacher	Seniors
1. Direct CF		1,077 (47.57%)	734 (53.22%)
2. Indirect CF		160 (7.06%)	79 (5.72%)
	a) indicating + locating error	102 (4.48%)	7 (0.50%)
	b) indication only	58 (2.55%)	72 (5.22%)
3. Metalinguistic CF		834 (36.83%)	362 (26.25%)
	a) Use of error codes	576 (25.32%)	109 (7.90%)
	b) brief grammatical descriptions	258 (11.34%)	253 (18.34%)
4. Comments		193 (8.48%)	204 (14.79%)
Total CF		2,264 (100**%**)	1,379 (100**%**)
Total CF from both teacher and seniors 3,643 (100**%**)		62.14**%**	37.85**%**

The table shows that most of the CFs were made by the teacher (62.14%), and direct CF was the most commonly used type in both teacher's and senior students' feedbacks (47.57% and 53.22%, respectively). Figure 2 below illustrates an example of a direct CF.
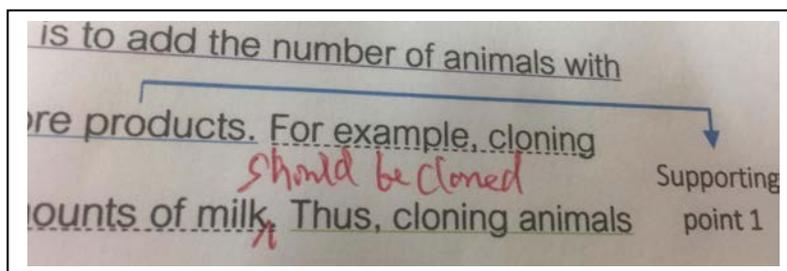

Figure 2. Sample of direct CF.

Moreover, metalinguistic CF was the common type used by the teacher and senior students (36.83% and 26.25%, respectively). For example, the guidelines of grammatical knowledge was provided in Figure 3 below.
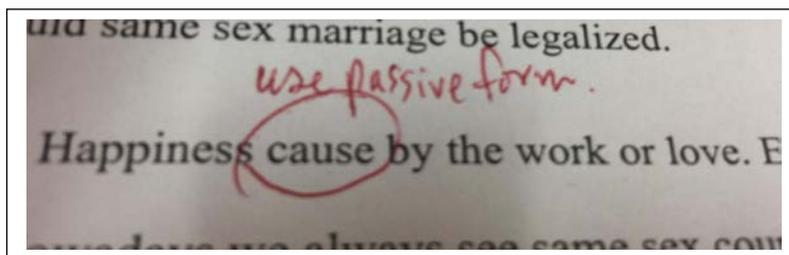
Figure 3. Sample of metalinguistic CF (brief grammatical description).

While many of the teacher's and senior students' feedbacks were direct, the teacher's feedback showed the use of more diverse types of feedback. Moreover, the teacher used metalinguistic CF, especially error codes (see Figure 4), more often than senior students.
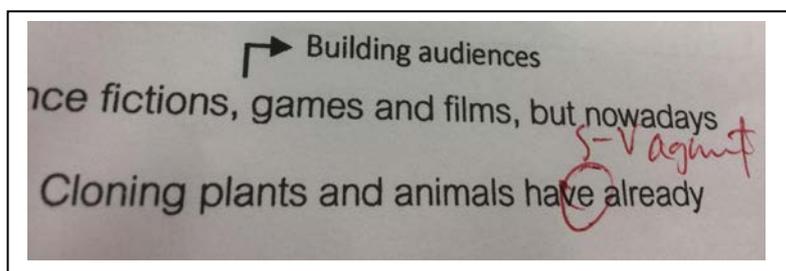

Figure 4. Sample of metalinguistic CF (error codes) used by the teacher.

Senior students, however, tended to give feedback by either providing brief linguistic descriptions (18.34%) or making comments (14.79%) more often than the teacher.

What are Students' Attitudes toward the Teacher's and Senior Students' Feedback?

The average mean scores of students' attitudes were interpreted based on the criteria set in Srisatitnarakoon (2007), and the average scores of higher than 3.49 (m = 3.5-5.00) mean the high level of opinion. Table 5 below presents the average mean scores of student attitudes toward the questionnaire.

Table 5 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the students' attitudes toward the teacher's and senior students' feedback (i.e., t-test is <0.05) in most of the paired-question items. For the question items 7-10, however, the sample t-test is not significant as the questions focus on the negative aspects of the teacher's and senior students' feedback (i.e., embarrassing and stressful). This means that students shared similar attitudes that teacher's and senior students' feedback are not stressful nor embarrassing.

TABLE 5
The Average Mean Scores of Students' Attitudes toward the Teacher's and Senior Students' Feedback

	Mean	SD	t
1. I prefer teacher feedback.	4.24	0.663	*9.764
2. I prefer senior feedback.	3.08	0.702	
3. Teacher feedback is useful.	4.28	0.737	*5.117
4. Senior feedback is useful.	3.64	0.700	
5. I feel more comfortable with teacher feedback.	4.00	0.957	*4.596
6. I feel more comfortable with senior feedback.	3.28	0.843	
7. Teacher feedback is more stressful.	3.44	1.261	1.405
8. Senior feedback is more stressful.	3.16	1.028	
9. Teacher feedback is embarrassing.	2.68	1.215	0.752
10. Senior feedback is embarrassing.	2.52	1.229	
11. Teacher feedback helps me improve my writing more.	4.28	0.843	*4.318
12. Senior feedback helps me improve my writing more.	3.64	0.860	
13. I feel more confident with my writing after receiving teacher feedback.	4.00	0.816	*5.632
14. I feel more confident with my writing after receiving senior feedback.	3.20	0.816	
15. Teacher feedback is more appropriate and efficient for the Essay Writing Course.	4.24	0.597	*7.401
16. Senior feedback is more appropriate and efficient for the Essay Writing Course.	3.40	0.707	

While students perceived that comments or feedback from seniors were useful to their writing, the mean score reflecting their opinions towards their favor of senior students' feedback was low (m = 3.08). Moreover, many students have expressed their lack of confidence in senior students' feedback (m = 3.20) and their attitudes towards the appropriateness and efficiency of senior feedback was at moderate level (m = 3.4). Further investigation was made, and consistent findings were also shown in students' responses to the open-ended questions in part 2 of the questionnaire regarding their opinions towards senior students' and teacher's feedback. It was found that while students felt comfortable receiving senior students' feedback (20.68%), and the comments were easy to understand (31.03%); they mentioned sometimes senior CFs were incorrect (25.92%), and some did not provide thorough feedback (29.62%).

> Some senior students made wrong corrections and identified the sentence which was already correct as a mistake. (Student AC)
> Not all of the seniors' feedbacks were correct. (Student AB)

With regard to student responses on the teacher's feedback, they perceived that the feedback was more precise (29.72%) and helped to reflect problems in their writing in terms of grammar, tenses, and structure (32.43%).

> Teacher provided correct grammar feedback and useful suggestion for writing. (Student X)
> Teacher made me aware of my mistakes. I received useful comments and knowledge of structure. (Student V)

However, many students have stated that it was hard to understand the teacher's comments because of the handwriting (45.83%) and some broad and unclear comments (20.83%).

> I couldn't read some of teacher's handwriting. (Student U)
> Teacher's handwriting was hard to read. I had to go slowly and tried to interpret. (Student L)

In addition, students found it inconvenient to arrange for further advice or meetings with the teacher (20.83%). Some have expressed their stress after receiving the teacher's feedback, and one has pointed out that she was not brave enough to address the teacher when she disagreed with the comments.

Which are the Types of Teacher's or Senior Students' Feedback That Help to Improve Students' Writing?

In order to find the answers to this research question, the writing drafts of six junior students who represented three different levels of academic performance (grades B-A = advanced, grade C = moderate, and grade D = poor) were selected for further investigation. The analysis was made in two perspectives: the effectiveness of their corrections and the types of feedback which lead to effective corrections. Comments (except complimenting) or feedback (except direct corrective feedback), provided by the teacher or senior students in drafts one and two were tracked to identify their improvements.

Effective corrections after receiving the comments

Figure 5 below compares the effectiveness of students' edited writing in the final drafts (draft 3) after receiving the feedback in draft 2 from the teacher.
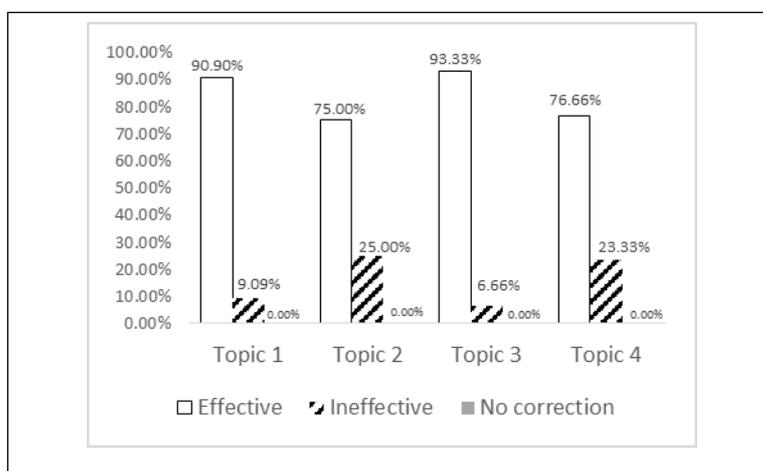

Figure 5. The improvements of students' writing in draft 3 after receiving feedback from the teacher.

Figure 5 shows that students have made improvements after receiving CFs from the teacher. The percentages of their effective corrections in their final drafts were high in all four topics. Further investigation was also made in the correction of student writing in their final drafts after receiving feedback from senior students. The findings are presented in Figure 6 below.

As can be seen in Figure 6, mistakes can still be seen in students' final drafts as well as some 'no corrections.' When examined further, it was found that 'no correction' was made in some parts of advanced students because the original sentences were already correct; however, the 'no correction' shown in poor students' drafts was not due to the same reason. Poor students instead deleted the mistakes and rewrote the sentences, yet they were still ineffective.
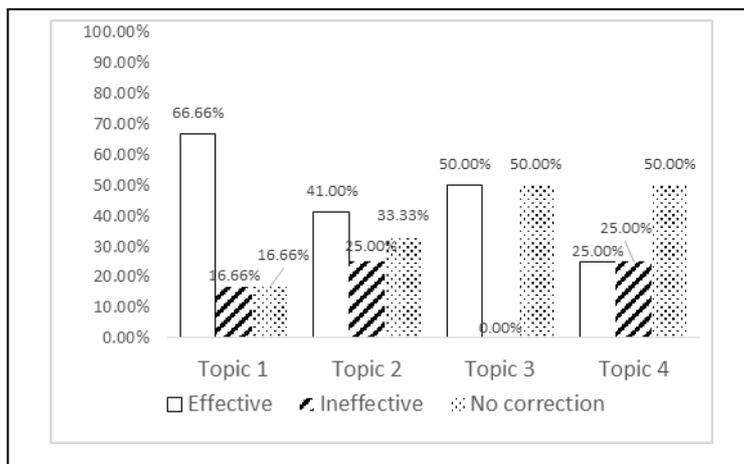
Figure 6. The improvements of students' writing in draft 3 after receiving feedback from seniors.

Types of feedback which lead to effective corrections

Correction in students' final drafts after receiving comments from the teacher and senior students were also analysed to see which types of feedback led to effective improvements. It was found that metalinguistic CF was the type used by both the teacher and senior students which led to most of the successful improvements in junior students' final drafts. Table 6 below illustrates evidence of this.

TABLE 6
Effective Types of Feedback

Feedback types	Effective		Ineffective		No correction	
	Teacher	Seniors	Teacher	Seniors	Teacher	Seniors
Indicating +locating errors	4 (5.06%)	-	-	1 (3.33%)	-	-
Indicating only	4 (5.06%)	1 (3.33%)	-	1 (3.33%)	-	2 (6.66%)
Metalinguistic CF: error codes	33 (41.77%)	5 (16.66%)	6 (7.59%)	1 (3.33%)	-	3 (10.00%)
Metalinguistic CF: brief grammatical descriptions	16 (20.25%)	6 (20.00%)	4 (5.06%)	1 (3.33%)	-	-
Comments	9 (11.39%)	3 (10.00%)	3 (3.79%)	1 (3.33%)	-	4 (13.33%)
Total teacher feedbacks = 79		Total senior feedbacks = 30				

Especially, 'error codes' used by the teacher led to most of the effective corrections as shown in Figure 7 below.
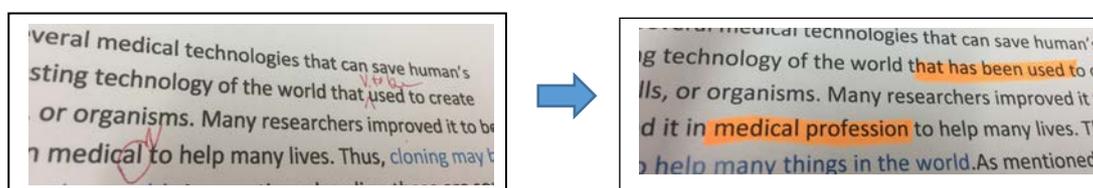

Figure 7. Correction after receiving metalinguistic CF (error codes) from teacher.

Moreover, 'grammatical description' was the type which often led to effective corrections after receiving feedback from senior students. In Figure 8 below, a senior student added the description to remind the junior not to begin a sentence with the conjunction "and".
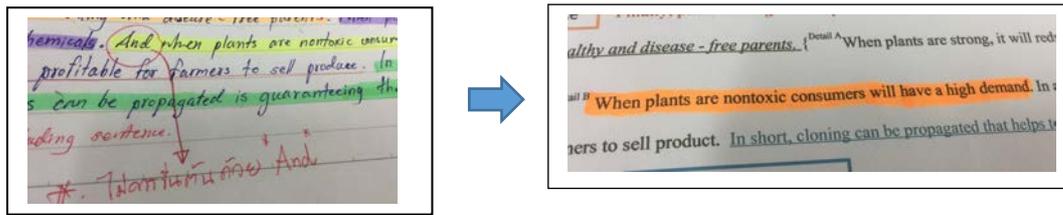
Figure 8. Correction after receiving metalinguistic CF from senior students (brief grammatical descriptions).

Discussion

The findings from the research study have led to some useful implications for the teaching of an English Essay Writing Course and the application of a senior students' feedback activity in an EFL learning context.

Teacher Intervention Is Still Needed

In this study students were divided into two groups (Group A and Group B). The two groups were assigned the same topics for writing, but had to take turns submitting their work to either the teacher or senior students. The writing process had gone through the correction in drafts 1 and 2 before students submitted their final draft (draft 3) to the teacher for assessment.

The effectiveness of senior students' feedback was examined, and it was found that even though the corrections of students' work in their final drafts were often effective; there were still significant percentages of those parts where the corrections were ineffective or no correction was made. When investigating further, the 'no correction' made in advanced students' drafts was due to the wrong feedback made by senior students. In other words, the original sentences were already correct, but the feedback was a mistake. In contrast, the 'no correction' in poor students' work meant that students solved the problem by leaving, cutting off the originals, and sometimes rewriting the sentence; yet it was still ineffective.

This implies that feedback from senior students could sometimes be ineffective, and that even though the feedback could help to improve the junior students' writing, senior students' feedback should not be final. Rather, teacher intervention is still needed to polish or edit students' work in draft 3 to provide feedback before students submitted draft 4 as their final draft. In this way, senior students could act as teacher assistants providing feedback in draft 1 and 2 before the junior students submit draft 3 to the teacher. The process can be simplified in Figure 9 below.
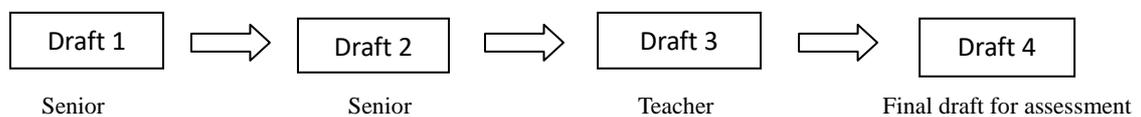

Figure 9. Proposed feedback process with teacher intervention.

Previous study of Maarof et al. (2011) found that a number of students preferred a combination of teacher and peer feedback. The effectiveness of organizing the feedback structure this way is something for future studies to investigate to compare the findings with the present study or other previous studies.

The Senior Students Who Could Provide Feedback Should Be Selected Systematically

It was clear from the findings that some senior students had limited knowledge of language skills to provide feedback. Moreover, junior students' responses in the questionnaire as well as a group discussion reflected that their confidence on senior feedback was low. They also stated that some senior students did not provide thorough feedback. When interviewing senior students, they explained that even though they found this activity useful, some of their comments might still be ineffective, as they also had limited understanding and knowledge of some complicated structure of language. In this study, the senior students whose grades in the past English Essay Writing Course were between C+ and A (with the scores between 65-100) were selected to provide feedback. Based on the findings, not all of these senior students had sufficient knowledge of language or experiences to provide feedback. This reflects that in addition to having teacher intervention in draft 3 as proposed above, the teacher had to consider other more reliable ways to select senior students who could provide feedback. In the study of Lee (2017), for example, peer reviewers on student writing were chosen based on their Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) scores, and the students who could provide feedback to other students had achieved the scores of higher than 600 out of the total score of 990. This method of selecting student reviewers could be applied in the future study of senior students' feedback to solve the abovementioned problem.

Intensive Training Is Important

The findings from an interview reflected the need for an intensive training for both junior and senior student groups.

From a group discussion with junior students, students mentioned that the focus of senior students' feedback was different to the focus of their writing. For example, senior students seemed to heavily emphasize the placement of the hook in the introduction while junior students focused more on setting up a clear thesis statement and preview of arguments. This reflects the mismatch of focus between the two groups of students. When considering the background of these research participants, the two groups had undertaken the same English Essay Writing Course from different teachers. The senior group had undertaken the course with the other colleague while the junior group had studied with the researcher as a teacher. The two teachers had prepared their own contents and teaching materials, based on the same learning goals. The contents are shown in Table 7 below.

TABLE 7
The Contents of an English Essay Writing Course that the Two Groups of Students Have Cncountered

Senior students	Junior students
Unit 1: Narrative writing	Unit 1: Fundamental elements for an English essay writing
Unit 2: Descriptive writing	- noun group, nominalization and reference nouns
Unit 3: Expository writing	- generating ideas (listing ideas & mind mapping)
	Unit 2: Revision of paragraph structure
	Unit 3: Writing an argumentative essay
	Unit 4: Argumentative essay with a counter argument
	Unit 5: Cohesion & coherence
	Unit 6: Using interpersonal metadiscourse markers: hedges, certainty markers, attributes, attitudes markers & commentaries

Table 7 shows that the foci of textbooks designed by the two teachers were different. While the first one designed the contents based on the genre-based approach, the other focused on the writing of an argumentative essay (Expository) and its structure. Tan and Manochphinyo (2017) argued that intensive training prior to the feedback activity is essential. Even though training was made in the present study, the training focused mainly on the essay writing structure and feedback types. A more intensive training is

however needed to negotiate the focus of the activity and to introduce the course contents, thereby ensuring that their feedback was made consistent with the contents learnt by junior students.

As far as the types of feedback is concerned, it was found that metalinguistic CF was the type used by the teacher and senior students which mostly led to effective corrections. In a group discussion, students also stated that the linguistic descriptions were helpful to guide them on what to do to fix their problems. The findings support the claim from previous studies that feedback should require students to work further to edit their drafts (e.g., Bangert-Drowns, Hurley & Wilkinson 1991; Hattie et al., 1996; Robb et al., 1986). By guiding the students with some linguistic clues, they could research further to enrich their knowledge through easy access to a variety of multiplatform learning tools which suited their individual interests or needs before editing their work. This would enable them not only to revise their knowledge of the subject matters, but also to become autonomous learners in a mobile world. Meanwhile, the findings also reflect that students were not familiar with all kinds of feedback used in this study, and that students have certain kinds of feedback which they prefer to receive or are familiar with. Therefore, the training of certain kinds of feedback types to be used in the activity should be organized.

Finally, the findings showed that many poor students responded to senior students' feedback by not making any changes in their subsequent drafts while deleting the whole sentences which contained mistakes or rewriting the whole part by saying something different. Upon the semi-structured interview, students said that the feedback was unclear and they did not understand how they were expected to change so they deleted the whole sentence to avoid further comments on the same issues. This reflects that students did not take the comments provided seriously and only selectively incorporated the feedback into their revision. As CF can only have an impact if students attend to it (Ellis, 2008,), the response to only surface level errors could limit their learning and understanding of the language issues, and thus obstruct them to improve their drafts more effectively. Training is therefore necessary for the junior students to raise their awareness of the benefits of the activity and encourage them to work more actively to edit their writing drafts.

Schedule for Further Consultancy Should Be Set up

Despite the problem of handwriting, one of the comments made by junior students regarding receiving feedback from the teacher was that the feedbacks were sometimes unclear and broad. When they wanted to arrange for further meeting for clarification, it was not convenient due to the busy schedule of the teacher. Moreover, some students have expressed stress after receiving teacher feedback, and one student had stated that she sometimes disagreed with the teacher comments, but did not ask for further explanation or discussion. The responses from students reflected that negotiations between teacher and students had to be made in different ways.

The unclear and broad comments were clarified by Maarof et al. (2011) that most writing teachers are more concerned with language specific errors and problems so teacher comments could be confusing, arbitrary, and inaccessible. The negotiation could therefore be made to seek the most preferred methods of feedback for both teacher and students. According to Salteh and Sadeghi (2015), preferences are important in that if teachers and students both have mutual understanding of the purpose of certain correction techniques and come to terms with their use, it would lead to fruitful feedback. Conversely, if teachers and students have mutually exclusive ideas regarding correction techniques, it could lead to ineffective feedback and result in students feeling discouraged to write. The teacher should therefore ensure at an early stage that students had mutual understanding of all the codes used in the feedback.

Negotiation should also be made regarding timing for further assistance. Sufficient time needs to be provided to assist students with their writing improvements. With the busy schedule of the teacher, an announcement can be made about the available time for consultancy or further explanations of the feedback.

Finally, the stress and confusion expressed by students after receiving feedback from the teacher is consistent with the findings from previous studies (e.g., Wanchid, 2015). This reflects the need to focus

more on the contents of students' writing. For the case that one student disagreed with the teacher but remained silent, Ruegg (2015) explained that even though students were encouraged to ask further questions if they disagreed or were not clear about the comment, they may have felt too many questions would burden the teacher so they may have chosen to remain silent, even when they were unsure about the feedback they received. This implies that students still did not have sufficient understanding of the goals of this activity. Therefore, it is important that the teacher negotiate the learning goals clearly and explain to students that any disagreement or different points of view would have no effect on their marks. This negotiation needs to be made at an early stage prior to the beginning of the activity.

Conclusion

This paper reports the results from the teacher's and senior students' feedback activity in an English essay writing classroom in Thailand. It was found that the activity was helpful to students, and that the metalinguistic type was used frequently by both teacher and senior students, which had led to the most effective correction. This finding is consistent with the claim from previous studies which found that direct CF with metalinguistic explanations help students improve their writing better than the direct CF in isolation (e.g., Sheen, 2007). Bitchener and Knoch (2009), however, found that there was no improvement after students received direct CF with or without metalinguistic explanation. This reflects the controversy of findings regarding the application of CF in different contexts.

Despite the limitations of this study in terms of intervention process or senior student selection as abovementioned, the study also has limitations concerning the research participants and feedback types. In this study, the participants were limited to only English major students (22 senior and 33 junior students), whose nature was different to other students from other faculties like business administration or engineering or even other students from different contexts. The findings gained in this study could therefore be limited to this learner group only, and may not be able to generalize to the larger groups of learners in other contexts. Moreover, the present study has applied the guidelines of feedback types as proposed by Ellis (2008) while there have been a number of scholars proposing different strategies for correcting student writing (e.g., Hattie et al., 1996; Kaweera & Usaha, 2008; Robb et al., 1986). The use of limited types of feedback in this study means that the findings can only reflect the effects of using certain strategies on students' writing improvements; however, the study still lacks the investigation of how other feedback strategies affect students' writing development compared with these strategies. Further studies could therefore employ a wider variety of feedback types and include students from different learning circumstances to compare the findings.

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