



# The Effects of a Holistic Approach to Developing Foreign Language Writing Competence of Students at Tertiary Level

## ผลของการใช้การสอนแบบรวมเพื่อการพัฒนาความสามารถการเขียนเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศของผู้เรียนในระดับอุดมศึกษา

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects a holistic approach on development of students' writing ability in terms of the quality of texts across various aspects of foreign language (FL) writing. This research adopted one-group pretest-posttest design. The participants of this study were 83 English-major students in their second year at a public university. They enrolled on a 15-week writing course in which a holistic approach to FL writing instruction was implemented. They were asked to compose an argumentative essay of between 250 and 350 words at the start and the end of the course as parts of a pretest and a posttest respectively. The essays were marked by two raters using a multiple-trait scoring system. The data were then analyzed by using t-test. The findings showed that there was a statistically significant increase in the mean scores from a pretest and a posttest across all areas of writing ( $p < .01$ ). The results suggested that a holistic approach had significant effects on development of FL writing ability of the university students. This reflected the students' progress of accumulation of expectations and requirements of writing conventions after the explicit writing instruction based on a holistic approach.

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## Keywords

Foreign Language Writing, Holistic Approach, Writing Instruction

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลของการใช้ทฤษฎีการสอนแบบองค์รวมในการพัฒนาความสามารถการเขียนของผู้เรียนโดยพิจารณาจากพัฒนาการการเขียนเป็นรายองค์ประกอบ การวิจัยนี้ดำเนินการทดลองตามแบบแผนการทดลองกลุ่มเดียว วัดก่อนและหลังการทดลอง (One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design) กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการวิจัย คือ นักศึกษาสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ชั้นปีที่ 2 จำนวน 83 คน ที่เรียนวิชาการเขียนซึ่งใช้ทฤษฎีการสอนการเขียนแบบองค์รวมในการจัดการเรียนการสอน มีการเก็บข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณ โดยให้ผู้เรียนทดสอบเขียนเรียงความเชิงตัวแย้ง ความยาวประมาณ 250 – 350 คำก่อนและหลังการทดลองสอนมีผู้ประเมินเรียงความ 2 ท่าน โดยใช้เกณฑ์การประเมินองค์ประกอบย่อยที่หลากหลาย (Multiple-Trait Scoring System) หลังจากวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยทดสอบค่า t-test และ ผลของการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า ค่าเฉลี่ยของทุกองค์ประกอบของ การเขียนหลังจากการสอนสูงกว่าก่อนการทดลองสอน อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .01 งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่าการสอนการเขียนแบบองค์รวมมีผลต่อการพัฒนาการเขียนเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศของผู้เรียนในระดับอุดมศึกษา ซึ่งพัฒนาการการเขียนที่ดีขึ้นเป็นผลมาจากการที่วิธีการสอนนี้เน้นให้ผู้เรียนเข้าใจลักษณะขององค์ประกอบต่างๆ ของงานเขียนและสามารถตระหนักรู้ถึงองค์ประกอบที่สำคัญของการเขียนเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

## คำสำคัญ

การเขียนเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ การสอนแบบองค์รวม การสอนการเขียน

## Introduction

### 1. Rationale of the Study

Writing English as a second or foreign language is very important for language learners as the competence to write effectively empowers language learners to successfully engage in academic or global communities (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993 ; Swales, 1990 ; Tribble, 1996). During their study at the tertiary level, students are assigned to compose various types of texts in English, e.g. academic essays, examinations, research projects, in order to demonstrate their understanding of discipline knowledge or to express their thoughts on particular issues. After graduation, they may also need to produce various kinds of texts, for example, business letters, in professional contexts (Jarunthawatchai, 2010 ; Noonkhan, 2012 ; Wongsothorn, 1994).



However, Thai university students' writing competence in English is particularly poor (Prapphal, 2003 ; Wongsothorn, Hiranburana & Chinnawongs, 2002). Writing in English is considered one of the most difficult skills to master for Thai students as they encounter a number of problems in their writing. The students are unable to express their own ideas due to their inadequate language resources (Wanchid, 2007 ; Rodsawang, 2017). Their ability to convey meanings to the readers is inadequate due to the lack of discourse features in their written texts (Noonkhan, 2012). In addition, they lack the writing skills to effectively deal with the complex process of writing; thus, writing skills training is needed (Baker & Boonkit, 2004). They might be unable to apply the knowledge they learn in reproducing written texts in varied contexts due to the fact that little attention is paid to awareness of purpose, audience, and social context of writing (Krisnachinda, 2006).

The problems that Thai students encounter in L2 writing seem to be similar to those of the learners in other cultural contexts. Ferris (2012) explained that most L2 learners have difficulties in writing due to limited exposure to the written L2 language. They then have inadequate knowledge and control of language resources, syntactic knowledge, rhetorical structures to convey their ideas, and awareness of social context of written texts. Eventually, they are likely to lack confidence in producing written texts in academic and professional contexts. Leki (1992) pointed out that one of the factors contributing to limited L2 writing competence is that students are not given sufficient opportunities to practice writing at textual levels; the writing instructions pay too much attention to writing at sentence level.

It is necessary for teachers to provide systematic teaching instructions to improve writing skills at the tertiary level (Wongsothorn, Hiranburana & Chinnawongs, 2002). Students' development in L2 writing is a direct consequence of the teaching that they received (Archibald, 2004). The writing instructions, thus, should offer explicit explanation on various aspects of L2 writing and focus on the interaction of these different areas in writing (Archibald, 2004 ; Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008 ; Paltridge, Harbon, Hirsch, Shen, Stevenson, Phakiti & Woodrow, 2009). Particularly in Thai context, this should enable students to gain a thorough view of the complexity of L2 writing (Tangpermpoon, 2008). Thus, the teaching instruction should focus on multiple areas of writing, namely, rhetorical features, contexts of writing, and writing process.

The instruction should focus on written texts at rhetorical level. The students should be aware that merely grammar and sentence structure knowledge is insufficient to help them produce meaningful written texts in L2. An emphasis should be paid on the way to organize sentences into specific rhetorical structures, particularly, writing academic essays of which their organizational structures are tied with L1 cultural norms (Archibald, 2001; Hatch, 1992 ; Kopperschmidt, 1985). After teachers' explicit teaching of such as organizational structures, students should be able to

utilize knowledge of rhetorical structures to produce their own larger and more meaningful written texts in L2 (e.g. Archibald, 2001 ; Kaplan, 1967 ; Leki, 1992 ; Silva, 1990). Transferring this notion into practice, Noonkhan (2012) studied the effects of explicit instruction of organizational structures on student writing in L2. It was found that there was significant improvement in the overall features, communicative quality, and organization traits of written texts. Despite no significant development in cohesion and coherence, there was indication that the students were able to incorporate such features into their own writing, resulting in more meaningful written texts with rhetorical structures they learned in the classes.

In addition, the instruction should increase students' awareness of the context of written texts. It is crucial that students understand how texts interact with readers in a particular social context. Writing should be viewed as a communicative activity in which texts are produced in order to achieve particular social purposes which are recognized by readers (Tribble, 1996). The assumption is that texts are written with specific language features, e.g. rhetorical structures, syntactic structures, choices of vocabulary, in order to achieve the purpose in context. The instruction should provide explicit explanation on how language features of the written texts are related to the norms and expectations of a specific social context in writing (Hyland, 2003a, 2003b, 2004). Jarunthawathai (2010) investigated the development of students' awareness of social context and its relation to textual features through explicit instruction over a 15-week writing course. It was found that students viewed writing from a broader perspective, i.e. they recognized the social context of writing as well as language features, and were aware that those features were interconnected. The students were aware that the choices of rhetorical structures and language features used in writing were related to norms and expectations of a social context in which a particular type of text was situated.

The writing instruction should also incorporate the notion of composing process in L2 writing classrooms. Students need to recognize that the process of writing is not a straightforward and linear sequence of planning-writing-revising-editing, instead it is complex and recursive in nature (e.g. Perl, 1980 ; Witte, 1987 ; Zamel, 1982, 1983). In process-oriented teaching, teachers allocate ample time for students to select topics, develop ideas, organize ideas, write drafts and revise drafts based on teachers' and peers' feedback. It is common that students write multiple drafts and make several revisions (e.g. Raimes, 1998 ; White & Arndt, 1991). The training of writing strategies to deal with the complex nature of the writing process is also part of the teaching instruction. It is important to raise students' awareness of effective strategies used by more proficient writers and train them to use these strategies to improve their writing (e.g. Baker & Boonkit, 2004 ; Chotirat, 1998 ; Nuchsong, 1997) and avoid using ineffective writing strategies that may hinder their writing development (Baker & Boonkit, 2004).



## 2. A Holistic Approach to Teaching L2 Writing

Based on aforementioned argument in previous section, a holistic approach to FL writing instruction which aims at providing explicit instruction on multiple aspects, i.e., rhetorical features, contexts of written texts, and process writing, was necessary for the development of the participants' L2 writing proficiencies. The teaching practice thus relies on an integration of genre-based and process-oriented approaches to L2 writing instruction. The main principle of the genre-based approach is to help students produce effective written texts suitable for the target context of writing by providing "explicit understanding of how texts are structured and why they are written in the ways they are" (Hyland, 2007, 151). Students were given opportunities to analyze the context in which texts are written. Explicit instruction on choices of rhetorical structure, grammar, and language use in writing specific types of written texts was also given. This is a key element of educating students to recognize how choices of language work in context of writing.

Another element of the instruction was a process-oriented instruction which was mainly concerned with raising students' awareness that the nature of writing is a complex process of expressing meanings and that writers may employ different processes when producing texts; it is not a straightforward step of think-then-write sequence (Susser, 1994). In the process-oriented classrooms, students were provided with a supportive environment in which they could go through the complex and recursive process of writing. They were given ample time to choose topics, develop ideas, write drafts, and make revisions based on feedback from peers and teachers. Writing multiples drafts was encouraged as it is significant to help students to explore and truly express their own meanings (Raimes, 1991 ; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996 ; White & Arndt, 1991).

An implementation of a holistic teaching practice primarily relied on Feez & Joyce's (1998) genre-based teaching/learning cycle which consists of five stages: building the context, modelling and deconstructing the text, joint construction of the text, independent construction of the text and linking related texts. The process-oriented instruction was blended into a joint construction of the text and independent construction of the text stages. Details of instruction were as follows:

### 2.1 Stage 1: Building the context

The teaching started with the building the context stage. Its significant principle was to raise the students' awareness that language use in a social setting is structured based on the purposes it is set to achieve in a particular social context. It is particularly important for students to be aware of the social context in which a particular text is situated in order to gain understanding

of the purpose of a particular type of text (Callaghan, Knapp & Noble, 1993). In the classroom, the teacher directed the students to explore different social context of a written text by using guided questions stimulating students' discussion of various aspects of context, e.g. writing situation, communicative purposes, relationship between readers and writers. This should help the students understand how meaning is created in context; a particular text is not produced in isolation to context.

## 2.2 Stage 2: Modelling and deconstructing the text

Next was the modelling and deconstruction the text stage. The teacher still provided strong support to direct the students' learning. The top-down approach to textual analysis was adopted at this stage. The textual analysis started with the overall organization of the entire text, then moved to micro features of language use. In the classroom, the students were guided to explore the overall rhetorical features of the text, followed by analysis of organizational structure of different parts of the text. The teacher later moved to the analysis of grammatical features as well as choices of vocabulary. Another significant point at this stage was to enable students to understand how overall rhetorical structure, organizational structure of each stage of the text, sentence structures, grammatical features, and choices of language use, are structured in order to achieve its communicative purposes in context. Explicit explanation on rhetorical feature, grammar, and vocabulary was also provided at this stage, as the explicit knowledge of language resources is crucial for effective text production.

## 2.3 Stage 3: Joint construction of the text

In the joint construction of the text stage, the teacher acted as a facilitator who guided students to compose a sample of the target text. A process-based teaching model by White & Arndt (1991) was incorporated at this stage in order to introduce students to the notion of writing as a process. The significant notion was to help students incorporate the explicit knowledge of social context and textual features into their writing process. At this stage, students were assigned to work in small groups to compose a written text. With teacher guidance, the students used their knowledge of context in a brainstorming activity where they developed relevant ideas for writing and excluded irrelevant details. They then developed an outline for the writing which was based on the rhetorical feature of the target text. It was expected that students needed to explore further ideas, develop more detailed information, or ignore some of the irrelevant information at the outlining process. Based on the outline, they drafted their essay. They needed to utilize their knowledge of grammar and the choice of language used that they have learned in their writing. In the revising process, the teacher and students developed criteria for text evaluation based on the



knowledge of rhetorical knowledge and language features from the first two stages. In practice, each student conducted their own self-evaluation and revision. Later, they were encouraged to exchange the draft with peers for comments. The students revised the drafts following peers' suggestions. Students were warned that the linear sequence of the presentation of classroom activities was for teaching practice reasons only; it did not reflect the nature of the composing process. In fact, a number of activities, e.g. developing ideas, outlining, drafting, revising the drafts, that each writer engages may occur repeatedly and process through different sequences throughout the recursive and complex process of writing (Kellogg, 1994).

#### 2.4 Stage 4: Independent construction of the text

In the independent construction of the text stage, individual students utilized the knowledge of context, textual features, and process writing to produce their own written text. It was suggested they followed the writing process that was mentioned in the joint construction of the text stage. Consultations with the teacher and peers were allowed if students needed comments or advices.

#### 2.5 Stage 5: Linking related texts

In the final stage, linking related texts, students reflected on their own learning and other written texts in the same or similar contexts. In the classroom, students were encouraged to discuss what they have learned in terms of writing effective texts. As the class progressed, they discussed the similarities and differences of the various kinds of texts they had learned.

### Research Objective

The objective of this research was to investigate the effects of a holistic approach on development of students' writing competence.

### Research Methodology

#### 1. Research Design

This research employed a quasi-experimental design: the one group pretest-posttest design. It is a design in which one group of participants is measured in a pretest on a dependent variable (O1), followed by an experimental treatment (X), and then a posttest (O2). The effects of X is investigated by the comparison between pretest and posttest scores. In this study, the writing competence was measured in a pretest at the start of semester. Then, a holistic approach was applied in the teaching instruction of a 15-week writing course in order to improve the students' writing ability.

Following an experimental intervention, the research again measured the students' competence in the posttest at the end of the course and proceeded to analyze the scores from pretest and posttest to find out the effects of a holistic-based teaching instruction on development of students' writing competence. The one group pretest-posttest design can be represented as:

*Experimental*

$O_1$

$X$

$O_2$

(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, 322)

## 2. Participants

Eighty-three English-major students in their second year who were enrolled on the Integrated English Reading and Writing Skills unit, a 15-week course with three hours of scheduled classes each week, at a public university in central Thailand voluntarily participated in this study. They were in intact classes. The participants consisted of 14 males and 69 females, aged between 19 and 20. They each attended more than 80% of the scheduled classes and completed all parts for data collection. Their proficiency level was generally intermediate and they were familiar with the basic elements of writing in L2, as they completed two compulsory writing units prior to enrollment on this writing course. They were taught by a holistic approach to writing instruction. The sequence of classroom practices followed five-stage teaching instruction, i.e. building the context, modelling and deconstructing the text, joint construction of the text, independent construction of the text, and linking related texts (see Section 2).

## 3. Data Collection

The instrument employed in this study was a pretest and a posttest. The students were asked to write an argumentative essay at the start and at the end of the writing course, under timed test formats as part of a placement test and a final examination respectively. One hour and a half was provided to complete each task.

Writing prompts were present in the form of a short statement followed by a question. The choices of task prompts provided were related to topics of interest in general and local issues relevant to the students' background. This was to minimize the problems of students' lack of prior knowledge in writing. The writing prompts were presented to students as follows:

3.1 More and more students are working part-time during their study. Do the benefits outweigh the disadvantages?

3.2 To save the environment, motorcycles and private cars should be banned on the campus. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?



3.3 There is a shortage of on-campus accommodation. Should all senior students be required to live off-campus?

The students were instructed to write an argumentative essay (between 250 and 350 words) in response to one of the given topics. Topic 1 was given to all students at the start of the course as a pretest. In the posttest, all three writing prompts were provided to the students. Sixty-nine students wrote the essay in response to Topic 1. The remaining 14 students chose Topic 2. None of them selected Topic 3. They were able to complete the writing tasks within the time given. A review of the students' essays showed that they understood the requirements of the writing task and were able to express their ideas within the topics.

#### 4. Data Analysis

In order to investigate the students' writing competence development across various aspects of writing, a multiple-trait marking system, which was adapted from Hamp-Lyons' (1991a, 49-151) profile scales, was used to mark the students' texts for the initial and final tests. Its underlying concept was based on "context-appropriate and task-appropriate criteria" (Hamp-Lyons, 1991b, 247). The scores awarded to each text was based on various traits of written texts relevant to specific task requirements. The marking thus provide diagnostic information on students' competence across various areas of L2 writing. In his study, the adapted multiple-trait scoring scale employed to mark students' texts taken from a pretest and a posttest was based on the following sub-scales as follows:

4.1 Communicative quality: overall impression of the writers' ability to communicate the message to the readers

4.2 Interestingness: creativity and novelty of argument/idea presented in the text

4.3 Organization: organizational structure of the information/content

4.4 Content: presentation of information/argument relevant to the purpose of the specific text

4.5 Cohesion: usage of cohesions to connect information/ideas within paragraphs

4.6 Linguistic accuracy: correctness of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation so as not to inhibit communication

4.7 Linguistic appropriacy: usage of language features, i.e. choices of grammar and vocabulary, appropriate for the context of writing a particular text

Each of these sub-scales was scored on a nine-band scale. One was the lowest and nine was the highest score (See Appendix 1 for the band descriptors). The students' essays

were marked after the course was completed by two raters. The first rater was a Thai lecturer with over four years' experience of teaching English academic essays. She was one of the lecturers who taught this writing course and was familiar with multiple-trait scale. The other rater was a native English speaker with more than 15 years of experience in teaching English at the higher education level in Thailand. He did not teach this writing course. He, however, was accustomed to the requirements of an argumentative essay and had experience with the multiple-trait scale. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to examine inter-rater reliability between the scores given to the essays by the two raters. The computed Pearson correlation coefficient  $r$  on the scores was .799. Correlation is significant at the .01 level, two-tailed. The results indicated a significantly strong relationship between the scores marked by the two raters. After the inter-rater reliability was completed, students' essays from the pretest and the posttest were marked by the two raters and their scores were used in data analysis. Should there were differences in the scores, this was resolved by the raters' discussion to arrive at the agreed marks. The statistical technique used for data analysis was paired-samples t-test.

## Results

### 1. A Comparison of the Mean Scores between the Pretest and the Posttest

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the effects of a holistic approach on students' writing ability in terms of scores on the written tasks, as shown in Table 1. Firstly, there was a statistically significant increase in scores for communicative quality from pretest ( $M = 5.175$ ,  $SD = 0.951$ ) to posttest ( $M = 6.151$ ,  $SD = 0.822$ ),  $t(82) = -13.717$ ,  $p < .001$ . Secondly, students made a statistically significant improvement on scores for interestingness from pretest ( $M = 4.699$ ,  $SD = 0.883$ ) to posttest ( $M = 6.157$ ,  $SD = 0.761$ ),  $t(82) = -17.163$ ,  $p < .001$ . The students also showed a statistically significant increase on scores for organization from pretest ( $M = 3.970$ ,  $SD = 0.790$ ) to posttest ( $M = 6.488$ ,  $SD = 0.834$ ),  $t(82) = -31.970$ ,  $p < .001$ . Next, there was a statistically significant increase in scores for content from pretest ( $M = 4.114$ ,  $SD = 0.746$ ) to posttest ( $M = 6.349$ ,  $SD = 0.727$ ),  $t(82) = -32.508$ ,  $p < .001$ . In addition, there was a statistically significant increase in scores for cohesion from pretest ( $M = 4.018$ ,  $SD = 0.935$ ) to posttest ( $M = 6.060$ ,  $SD = 0.782$ ),  $t(82) = -21.732$ ,  $p < .001$ . The results also showed a statistically significant increase in scores for linguistic accuracy from pretest ( $M = 4.187$ ,  $SD = 0.886$ ) to posttest ( $M = 5.584$ ,  $SD = 0.822$ ),  $t(82) = -17.506$ ,  $p < .001$ . Finally, there was a statistically significant improvement on scores for linguistic appropriacy from pretest ( $M = 3.970$ ,  $SD = 0.717$ ) to posttest ( $M = 5.801$ ,  $SD = 0.667$ ),  $t(82) = -24.305$ ,  $p < .001$ .



These results suggested that a holistic approach had positive effects on the development of students' writing competence. It could thus be concluded that this approach contributed to production of essay with higher quality in all areas of writing, namely, communicative quality, interestingness, organization, content, cohesion, linguistic accuracy, and linguistic appropriacy (Appendix 2 showed samples of a student's essays from a pretest and a posttest).

**Table 1**

Paired-samples t-test of pretest and posttest scores

Traits	Tests	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	Sig.
Communicative quality	Pretest	83	5.175	0.951	-13.717	.000**
	Posttest	83	6.151	0.822		
Interestingness	Pretest	83	4.699	0.883	-17.163	.000**
	Posttest	83	6.157	0.761		
Organization	Pretest	83	3.970	0.790	-31.970	.000**
	Posttest	83	6.488	0.834		
Content	Pretest	83	4.114	0.746	-32.508	.000**
	Posttest	83	6.349	0.727		
Cohesion	Pretest	83	4.018	0.935	-21.732	.000**
	Posttest	83	6.060	0.782		
Linguistic accuracy	Pretest	83	4.187	0.886	-17.506	.000**
	Posttest	83	5.584	0.822		
Linguistic appropriacy	Pretest	83	3.970	0.717	-24.305	.000**
	Posttest	83	5.801	0.667		

\*\* p<.01

## Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a holistic approach to developing foreign language writing competence of students at university level. The scores from the pretest and posttest gathered from the one group pretest-posttest research design were used to illustrate the development of the quality of written texts after the intervention. The findings showed that students showed improvement in their writing ability as they gained statistically significant higher scores in all areas of writing after the implementation of holistic approach to FL writing instruction ( $p<.01$ ). This improvement illustrated the direct effects of explicit teaching instructions on improving students' writing across all the traits.

As can be seen from the pretest scores, students gained relatively low mean scores across all traits. This might be attributed to the students' lack of awareness of the writing conventions prior to the writing instruction. It was likely that the students utilized their own overall English proficiency and previous background knowledge in foreign language writing in order to write an argumentative essay for the initial written task for the pretest; however, their attempt was unsuccessful. A number of scholars (e.g. Archibald, 2001; Ferris, 2012 ; Hatch, 1992 ; Kopperschmidt, 1985) maintained that written texts, especially argumentative essay, in English have their own writing conventions and their rhetorical structures are tied with native-speakers' cultural norms. Thus, students' unsuccessful writing was likely to be caused by their failure in recognition of specific rhetorical features and conventions of argumentative texts based on the norms and expectations of western culture (Archibald, 2001 ; Hatch, 1992). As Jarunthawatchai (2010) observed, writing argumentative essay was especially challenging for Thai students as they might not be familiar with the rhetorical structure and writing conventions in which the writer's position on a controversial issue is put forward by arguing on both sides of the arguments.

The statistically increase of the mean scores across all the traits in the posttest showed significant improvement of the quality of written texts in all areas at the end of their course, indicating students' improvement of writing ability that was resulted from the implementation of a holistic-based teaching instruction. It could be claimed that this study offered an empirical evidence to support proposals from various scholars (Archibald, 2004 ; Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008 ; Paltridge et. al. 2009 ; Tangpermpoon, 2008), maintaining that teaching instruction focusing on multiple and complex aspects of writing is an effective teaching practice in improving writing competence of second or foreign language students. This study also shed some light on the way to solve writing problems by Thai students described by a number of scholars in Higher Education context (Wanchid,



2007 ; Noonkhan, 2012 ; Baker & Boonkit, 2004 ; Krisnachinda, 2006) as this writing instruction helped students gain necessary resources to tackle difficulties that they might face when writing in FL.

The results of this study were also in accordance with Hyland's (2003a, 2003b, 2004) assertions that explicit instruction on second language writing was more effective than implicit teaching practice. It was crucial that genre specific conventions and awareness of process writing was explicitly provided. Should the implicit approach be adopted and learners were responsible for discovering writing conventions and process of writing by themselves, it is unlikely that L2 students, especially in an Asian context, would be able to fully deconstruct the writing conventions of western culture's norms and that they might struggle with the process of composing a written text with specific requirements.

## Conclusion

### 1. Implementation of a Holistic Approach into Practice

The results of this study showed that students' unsuccessful attempt, in the initial task, in producing a written text to meet the task requirements was likely to be caused by limited knowledge in L2 writing and unfamiliarity with the norms and conventions of writing in specific context. At the end of the course, empirical data from a multiple-trait scoring system showed that students had significant improvement in L2 writing ability across all traits, resulting from the instruction targeting development in multiple areas of L2 writing. This suggested that explicit instructions in L2 writing played a significant role in developing individual students' knowledge of the composing process, rhetorical structures and cultural norms all of which are significant for L2 learners in producing successful texts that meet the cultural specific requirements.

### 2. Implications for Instruction

With an awareness that successful learners are required to be exposed to various aspects of L2 writing, i.e. linguistic resources, rhetorical structures, social contexts, and process of composition (Ferris, 2012 ; Leki, 1992) and that explicit knowledge on multiple areas in L2 writing should be provided in classroom teaching (Archibald, 2004 ; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008 ; Paltridge et al., 2009), this study offers a practical instruction that systematically deals with the complexity of L2 writing knowledge in a classroom. Five phases of instruction which were based on the Feez & Joyce's (1998) cycle and the White & Arndt's (1991) process writing model should be a guidance that enables students to recognize and incorporate knowledge of various aspects of writing into their own process writing.

According to the findings, the better quality written texts that students produced at the end of the study resulted from a clearer understanding of the conventions and norms of writing an argumentative essay. This suggested that a holistic approach to teaching multiple aspects of L2 writing contributed to the improvement of L2 writing in all aspects. This study offers a practical guideline to targeting areas of L2 writing that could be applied in writing classrooms, especially in the higher educational context in Thailand. It is hoped that this study may offer a different perspective in L2 writing instruction. As Tangpermpoon (2008) suggested, an approach focusing on a specific area writing in isolation from other aspects is inadequate in dealing with complexity of L2 writing.

### 3. Future Research

Further studies should be carried out to study the application of a holistic approach to teaching students from various academic backgrounds in different local contexts. Participants in the future research should be required to write different kinds of academic genres, e.g., expository essays, discussion essays, or professional genres, e.g. business letters, in the pretest and the posttest. Experimental research may need to be conducted in order to offer a more in-depth view of the effectiveness of the teaching approach and generalized findings. Qualitative research design is also needed in order to offer insights into the impacts of the holistic approach on students' developmental progress of L2 writing competence over time.

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Appendix 1  
The band descriptors

	Communicative Quality	Interestingness	Organization	Content	Cohesion	Linguistic Accuracy	Linguistic Appropriacy
9	The writing displays an ability to communicate in a way that gives the reader full satisfaction.	The writing shows high creativity and novelty, fully engrossing the reader.	The writing displays a completely logical organisational structure which enables the message to be followed effortlessly.	Relevant content is presented in an interesting way, with main ideas prominently and clearly stated, with complete effective supporting material; content is effectively related to the purpose of the genre.	The writing shows fully effective use of all aspects of cohesions which enables the information and ideas within paragraphs to be followed effortlessly.	The reader sees no errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	There is an ability to manipulate the linguistic system with complete appropriacy.
8	The writing displays an ability to communicate without causing the reader any difficulties.	The writing shows novelty and creativity, sustaining interest throughout.	The writing displays a logical organisational structure which enables the message to be followed easily.	Relevant content is presented in an interesting way, with main ideas highlighted, effective supporting material and they are well related to the purpose of the genre.	The writing shows appropriate use of wide range of cohesive devices, resulting in logical sequences of information and ideas within paragraphs.	The reader sees no significant errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	There is an ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately.



7	The writing displays an ability to communicate with few difficulties for the reader.	The writing has frequent novel ideas that evoke reader interest and attention.	The writing displays good organisational structure which enables the message to be followed throughout.	Content is well presented with relevant supporting material and an attempt to relate them to the purpose of the genre.	The writing shows well use of a range of cohesion which allows logical connection of ideas within paragraphs, although there may be occasionally under-/over-use of some cohesive devices.	The reader is aware of but not troubled by occasional minor errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	There are minor limitations to the ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately which do not intrude on the reader.
6	The writing displays an ability to communicate although there is occasional strain for the reader.	The writing occasionally shows interesting ideas that attract reader attention.	The writing is organised well enough for the message to be followed throughout.	Content is presented, but it may be difficult for the reader to distinguish main ideas from supporting material; main ideas may not be supported; their relevance may be dubious; content may not be related to the purpose of the genre.	The writing reveals generally adequate cohesive devices to connect logical ideas in paragraphs; some are occasionally awkward, or may not always be used clearly or appropriately.	The reader is aware of errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar – but these intrude only occasionally.	There is limited ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately, but this intrudes only occasionally.



5	The writing displays an ability to communicate although there is often strain for the reader.	The writing occasionally provides new information but little of it is interesting.	The writing is organised well enough for the message to be followed most of the time.	Content is presented but may lack relevance clarity, consistency, or support; it may not be related to the purpose of the genre.	The writing displays inadequate use of cohesive devices, ideas within paragraphs are not always smoothly connected; there may be inaccurate or over-use some connections; some of connections may be missing.	The reader is aware of errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar which intrude frequently.	There is limited ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately which intrudes frequently.
4	The writing shows a limited ability to communicate, which puts strain on the reader throughout.	The writing is routine in the major part of its content with little new information.	The writing lacks a clear organisational structure and the message is difficult to follow.	Content is inadequately presented and supported; it may be irrelevant; it may be difficult to see its relevance to the purpose of the genre.	The writing shows basic cohesive devices; they may be inaccurate or repetitive, necessary connections are often missing; ideas or sequence of information within paragraphs are not clearly connected.	The reader finds the control of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and grammar inadequate.	There is inability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately, which causes severe strain for the reader.



3	The writing does not display an ability to communicate although meaning comes through spasmodically.	The writing is dull and uninteresting for most readers.	The writing has no discernible organisational structure, and a message cannot be followed.	Some elements of information are presented, but the reader is not provided with appropriate content, or the content is mainly irrelevant.	The writing shows a very limited range of cohesive devices used to connect ideas within paragraphs, or those usages may fail to illustrate a logical relationship of ideas within paragraphs.	The reader is primarily aware of gross inadequacies of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	There is little or no sense of linguistic appropriacy, although there is evidence of sentence structure.
2	The writing displays no ability to communicate.	The writing is completely void of interesting content.	No organisational structure or message is recognizable.	A meaning comes through occasionally, but it is not relevant.	The writing shows little or no control of cohesive devices connecting ideas within paragraphs.	The reader sees no evidence of control of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	There is no sense of linguistic appropriacy.
1	A true non writer who has not produced any assessable strings of English writing. An answer which is wholly or almost wholly copied from the input text or task is in this category.						
0	Should only be used where a candidate did not attend or attempt this part of the test in any way.						

Adapted from Hamp-Lyons' (1991a) profile scale



## Appendix 2

### Student's sample essays

Student A's sample essay from the pretest

Do most students think working part-time take advantage or not ?

Some student works part-time in university. For example, teaching extra class, seller, etc. In contrast, some student work part-time out the university. For instant, sell food in department store, be seller in shop, etc. I think, university student working part-time can take both advantage and disadvantage.

Most student want to work part-time to take many benefits. When they work, they can get enough money in order to save it to pay education fee and can buy whatever they want. So they can help family about saving.

However, working part-time can take<sup>many</sup> disadvantage to students.

Some working part-time might finish work late at night so students will be exhausted and get up to study late. It can make them bad grade. In addition, It is risky if they go to work lonely

In conclusion, Although university students working part-time take many benefits, it can also take more disadvantage. Everybody can choose either one or other that they want.



Student A's sample essay from the posttest

Working part-time is great benefits to university students. Today, many university students work part-time in many job for example, restaurants, night clubs, companies and agencies. Although working part-time cause less paying attention in class and riskiness in working, it has many advantages because it make money and give new experience to them. In my opinion, working part-time is absolutely useful for university students.

Working part-time make university students get enough money to living. There are many jobs which offer them working part-time in university and out of it. Many students are assistance in companies, singer in night clubs or teacher in extra courses. It make money from 200 to 1000 baht per times or month so they can pay expenses of living themselves such as cost of dormitory and foods.

In addition, university students get new experiences in working part-time. Some students that work and cooperate with other people for example, managers and co-workers. They can learn not only be patient and be responsible but also sharing opinions and getting different attitudes of other people.

However, many people argue that working part-time make university students don't pay attention in class. Some students that work at night come to class late because of getting up late. Although some students have bad behaviors, I would argue that there are many students that work on other time come to class on time therefore they can pay attention to class extremely.

It may be objected that university students are risky in working. Some students go to work by motorcycles or cars. It's dangerous for them because of accidents. In some case this is true. Nonetheless, If they follow traffic rules and drive carefully on the road so they are safty. Furthermore, university students that go to work by public transportation. It make them save time and money. Then, it's less accidents.

In conclusion, working part-time is very useful for university students. They not only get money but also get new experiences in working. University students should work in suitable jobs without harm themselves.