

Using Writeabout as a Tool for Online Writing and Feedback

***** On the Internet *****

February 2023 – Volume 26, Number 4

<https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.26104int>

Budi Waluyo

Walailak University, Thailand

<budi.business.waluyo@gmail.com>

Aisah Apridayani

Walailak University, Thailand

<apridayani.edu@gmail.com>

Safnil Arsyad

Bengkulu University, Indonesia

<safnil@unib.ac.id>

Abstract

Writeabout is a web-based application specialized in writing that enables the implementation of synchronous and asynchronous formative writing tasks and the provision of written and oral feedback. Nonetheless, empirical research on the effects of this software on students' learning outcomes is extremely scarce. Thus, this study designed an English course incorporating formative online writing tasks and feedback mediated by *Writeabout* for 933 non-English major students (77.6% female, 22.4% male) at one autonomous university in southern Thailand. The pre- and posttest writing scores of students were compared, and a significant difference was noticed ($t(932) = 38.49, p < .001$). Formative online writing activities were found to predict students' accomplishments on the posttest writing ($F(932) = 11.03, p < .001$). Female and male students would receive similar learning outcomes in this case, but their proficiency levels would result in variances. The current study advances our understanding of how incorporating an online application may benefit EFL students.

Keywords: formative feedback; online writing; proficiency; writeabout

Writing is typically one of the most difficult skills for students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) to acquire (Apridayani et al., 2021). Continuous practice and formative feedback (i.e., feedback that is intended to influence students' thoughts or actions to improve their learning during the learning process) are frequently utilized to assist EFL students in developing their writing skills (Cheng et al., 2015). Over the last two decades, English writing classes have gradually shifted away from the use of pens

and paper and toward the use of computers and the internet, allowing English teachers to integrate online platforms that can facilitate synchronous and asynchronous writing practice and feedback delivery. While blogs and wikis were once popular platforms, the trend now favors the use of more complex, interactive online technologies that enable not only writing practice and feedback but also oral feedback delivery and improvement tracking (Arslan & Şahin-Kızıl, 2010).

One example of an online platform with such dynamic and complicated features is called a *writeabout*. It is an educational site that enables teachers to regularly and synchronously or asynchronously monitor and evaluate their students' writing development online. Teachers can also implement both written and oral formative feedback with tracked changes in students' writings, accessible through computers and smartphones anytime and anywhere, thereby creating flexibility in English writing classes (Panmei & Waluyo, 2021).

Recently, various studies have been conducted on how the integration of technology generates positive improvements in students' writing. The technology has been explored by previous studies ranging from websites that enable writing in blogging activities (Chuo, 2007; Orhan-Karsak, 2020; Sulistyono et al., 2019) to websites and applications that are not specifically designed for writing activities such as *Padlet* (Kharis et al., 2020) and *Whatsapp* (Suhaimi et al., 2019). The current study intends to continue the exploration by investigating how the incorporation of a *writeabout* into an English writing class affects students' learning outcomes. The investigation focuses on the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation process by teachers using formative written feedback. In such an approach, students steadily improve their writing by responding to feedback from teachers. This study also examines the disparities in integration based on students' gender and English proficiency levels. The study's findings can be utilized as guidance for English teachers who want to use *writeabout* in their English writing classes.

Literature Review

Feedback in Online Writing

In this study, the intervention involved the teachers' written corrective feedback on students' essays written on the application named the *writeabout*. Thus, "corrective feedback (CF)" refers to teachers' written comments on the appropriateness or correctness of students' production or comprehension of English in their writing (Li & Vuono, 2019). Ellis (2009) describes corrective feedback (CF) as a form of response to a learner's linguistically incorrect utterance. The response can consist of (1) a statement that a mistake has been made, (2) the transmission of the right target language form, (3) metalinguistic information regarding the cause of the problem, or any combination of these. This study embraces Ellis's ideas in the implementation of written CF among the involved teachers, where teachers read students' essays and evaluate them against the writing assessment rubrics comprising five criteria, such as task achievement, grammar, vocabulary, logic, and mechanics, as presented in Table 2.

In writing classes involving the integration of online platforms, teachers' written CF has been investigated from a variety of perspectives, including the forms of audio-visual and text-based commentary (Grigoryan, 2017), the interactions between students' online writing activities (Chen, 2014), and the efficacy of teachers' CF compared to other types of feedback (Tian & Zhou, 2020). This highlights the importance of teachers' CF in the online writing environment. Students have also shown a preference for online writing with feedback. A study by Nobles and Paganucci (2015) exploring English students'

perceptions of writing skills and quality using digital tools and online writing environments versus pen and paper revealed that "... students perceive their writing to be of higher quality when writing with digital tools versus using a pen/pencil and paper and that writing in online environments fosters writing skill development. The findings lead to specific pedagogical suggestions, particularly that teachers should ensure that students compose with digital tools and that online feedback opportunities are maximized to promote positive perceptions of writing." (p. 16). Nonetheless, little is known regarding the effectiveness of teachers' CF in growing students' writing performance when offered formatively on *writeabout*, as well as the effects on students' final writing tasks, which this study attempts to examine.

The Integration of Writeabout into Writing Classes

Writeabout is a website designed primarily for teachers to build a virtual classroom writing community as well as a publication platform (Wilson, 2018). It promotes the notion that writing should be enjoyable, that sharing should be simple, and that more writing leads to better writing. In their review paper, Panmei and Waluyo (2021) emphasize that *writeabout.com* can be integrated into writing classes with various modes of instruction, including synchronous and asynchronous learning, onsite and online learning, and features to monitor the progress of each student's writing and provide both oral and written feedback synchronously and asynchronously. Teachers can use codes or import students from *Google Classroom* to establish virtual classrooms and add students. Students can find some engaging visual writing ideas in virtual writing classes, and they can create and post their writing, which can be read by their teachers and peers.

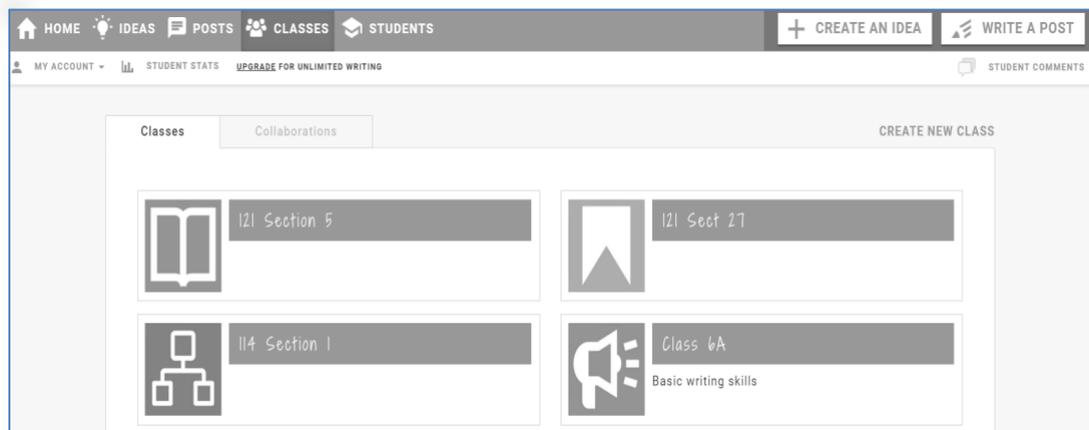


Figure 1. The Panel for Teachers to Create Virtual Classes

Another useful feature offered by *writeabout* is the opportunity to promote collaborative writing classes between teachers and students. Teachers can invite other teachers to observe and participate in their writing classes; the invited teachers can provide comments on students' writing, which can engage students with more diverse perspectives. Similarly, teachers can assign students to collaborate on a specific writing task; each student can access the website on their own and perform synchronous and asynchronous collaborative writing activities. These collaborative writing tasks can be carried out by students in the same class as well as students from different classes. In essence, *writeabout* allows teachers and students to examine and comment on each other's writing. Based on their analysis of learners' writing and responses to feedback, Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) suggest that learners working on writing assignments in pairs can boost

learning by providing opportunities for language interaction. The integration of peer evaluation and teacher feedback should significantly increase students' writing growth.

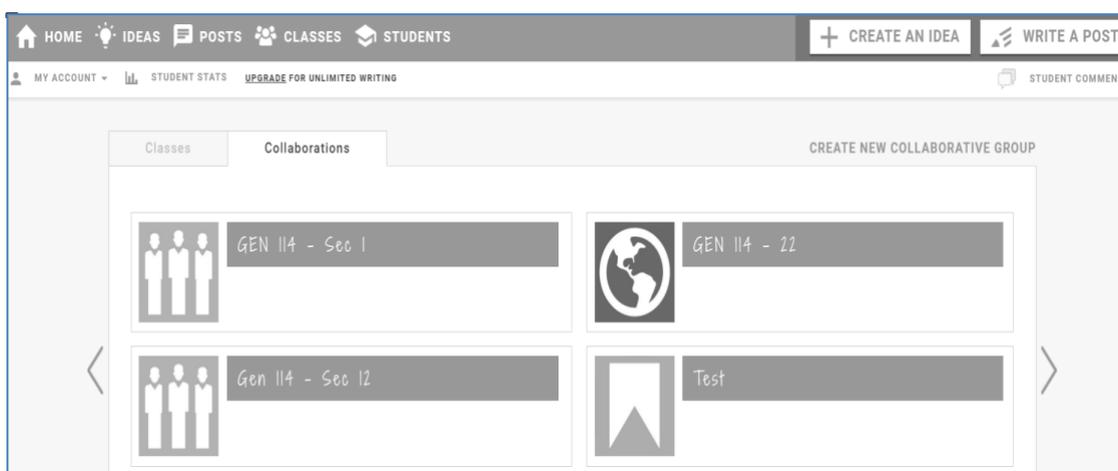


Figure 2. The Panel for Teachers to Create Collaborative Writing Classes between Students and Teachers

Despite the benefits it can provide for writing classes, only a few empirical studies have examined the integration of *writeabout* into English writing programs. For example, in 2018, Waluyo investigated the relationship between vocabulary acquisition and students' writing progress. The study developed a learning instruction that required students to study 50 words each week at the B1/B2 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for a period of ten weeks. Simultaneously, students were engaged in writing tasks that asked them to complete one short essay on *writeabout.com*. Teachers read and provided feedback on students' essays three times, and students rewrote their essays each time. The study found that students' degree of vocabulary acquisition played a major effect on their writing outcomes, but the significance level was higher for intermediate students than for beginners.

Two years later, in his subsequent studies, Waluyo (2020a) investigated the impact of ICT support on Thai EFL students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English both within and outside the classroom. *Writeabout* was one of the ICT resources made available to pupils, and it allowed them to compose and submit short essays virtually. ICT support did not improve the pupils' WTC. As a result, teachers are recommended to use ICT tools specifically developed to facilitate interactions among learners both within and outside the classroom, such as computer-mediated communication and online chat. Subsequently, Waluyo (2020b) investigated the learning outcomes of an English course implementation employing several e-learning technologies, such as *writeabout*. In this study, he employed *writeabout* to enable students' short essays and professors' written responses in a face-to-face classroom setting. The study found a considerable improvement from pretest to post test findings. The findings of this research support the benefits of including *writeabout* in an English writing lesson for students' writing growth skills. In a study studying technology-assisted teaching for global preparation, *writeabout* was found to be used for writing tasks; nonetheless, curricular and pedagogical issues were noticed with the new integration of technology into education (Carpenter & Justice, 2017).

Impact of Online Formative Writing and Feedback

With the advent of web- and mobile-based educational websites and applications, teachers now have more opportunities to extend their writing classroom activities online,

either synchronously or asynchronously (Cope et al., 2011). The implementation of online formative writing and feedback has been one of the interests expressed by educators and researchers in the area. Online formative writing is usually performed by engaging students with continuous writing activities in several sessions of a course. Mohamadi (2018), for example, used the Online Writing Forum (OWF) to engage EFL Iranian students in formative writing activities over the course of seven sessions, with pre- and posttests. His study confirmed improved writing ability among the students and recommended the inclusion of an online collaborative writing assessment intervention in online formative writing activities. Gikandi et al. (2011) conducted a review study on online formative writing, and the results indicated several benefits for students, such as fostering student-centered assessment and promoting the development of a learning community, yet the benefits would depend on the quality of the implemented authentic assessment activities and interactive formative feedback.

Lucas et al. (2019) researched students' perceptions of their learning experience by combining online formative writing and immediate feedback using the Academic Writing Analytics (AWA) web platform. The study reported on students' high evaluations for self-directed learning in writing following feedback and on students' writing confidence following final submission. Fernando (2018) used an online platform, Mahoodle, to engage students in formative writing tasks with feedback. The formative approach was seen to scaffold students' understandings of text compositions and to assist student writers in identifying and overcoming challenges they faced while learning to write. Nonetheless, Zhu et al. (2020) emphasized that students' improved writing performance may be related to their improved formative writing scores; for example, students with higher beginning scores were more inclined to edit following feedback. Contextualized feedback was indicated to be more beneficial in assisting with learning in this case.

Thus far, the predominant form of online formative writing portrays teachers as diagnostic feedback providers who position students at the center of learning in a supportive, process-oriented online writing classroom (Mohamadi, 2018). The feedback can be delivered via audio-visual and text-based commentary features (Grigoryan, 2017), on screen in the form of tags (color-coded symbols) and bold type to indicate reflective writing elements (Lucas et al., 2019), analytical and reflective genres (Knight et al., 2020), and asynchronous online student-teacher interactions in the integrated app (Fernando, 2020). It has been demonstrated that the incorporation of ICT tools into writing instructions is advantageous, as it facilitates the rapid exchange of ideas and the datafication of learning processes during the implementation of formative assessment (Shute & Rahimi, 2017).

It has been suggested that to enable effective online formative assessment using ICT tools, the emphasis should be on providing formative and immediate feedback, engaging students in critical learning processes (e.g., collaborative interactions and self-regulation), and encouraging equitable education by fostering responsive teaching and assessment and facilitating progressive learning (e.g., Gikandi et al., 2011). Nonetheless, even though the advancement of ICT and online formative assessment has provided new opportunities for writing teachers (Williams & Beam, 2019), the use of online formative assessment in L2 writing classrooms remains limited, particularly in online writing (White, 2019). Researchers have mostly focused on technological factors and investigated ICT tools ideal for formative assessment and their influence on students' writing, such as Google Docs, automated writing evaluation (Zhang & Hyland, 2018), and Microsoft Word tools (Lee, 2017). There has been little research done on writeabout.com, although this app

permits both written and spoken feedback, which offers significant benefits for online writing with feedback.

Previous Writing Learning Outcomes by Gender and Proficiency Level

Previous studies suggest that gender influences writing learning outcomes. Pajares et al. (2006), for example, conducted a study in the southern United States and discovered that gender has a significant impact on students' writing performance, with female students outperforming male students. Cahyono and Rahayu (2020) confirmed a similar finding when conducting a study with English-major students in Indonesia. Furthermore, females consistently earned higher essay scores, wrote more fluidly, changed their writing more frequently, and hesitated less frequently than males, according to Zhang et al. (2019). Meanwhile, concerning writing achievement and English proficiency, Maleki and Zangani (2007) reported a statistically significant association between English language proficiency and achievement in English writing subjects among Iranian EFL students. Additionally, Sasaki (2004) indicates that improved English proficiency allows one to produce more effective writing. Although several studies have been undertaken to investigate students' writing achievement by gender and English proficiency level, the majority of these studies used paper-based tasks and methods. A few studies have been conducted to examine students' writing learning outcomes when using computer-based tools such as *writeabout*. To add to the literature, the present study includes the gender and proficiency levels of students in the analysis of writing learning outcomes as a result of the study's intervention, which may shed light on the influences of these variables in online writing enhanced with feedback contexts.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study examined how incorporating *writeabout* into a general English writing course influences students' learning outcomes. It also investigated the variances of the learning outcomes by gender and English proficiency level. The following research questions guide the investigation:

1. How are the learning outcomes of a writing course integrating technology facilitating formative online writing and feedback?
2. How do learning outcomes differ by gender and proficiency level?

Methods

Research Design

This study aimed to examine the learning outcomes of integrating *writeabout* into an English writing class using a quantitative research design. The quantitative design enables the analysis of correlations between the variables of interest through the use of a variety of statistical approaches appropriate for applied linguistics research (Fryer & Ginns, 2018). It explored the students' writing development between the pre- and posttests and during online formative essay writing, where the teacher's feedback and writing revisions occurred. It also ran statistical analyses on the roles of gender and proficiency levels that might affect students' writing development within the implemented learning instruction.

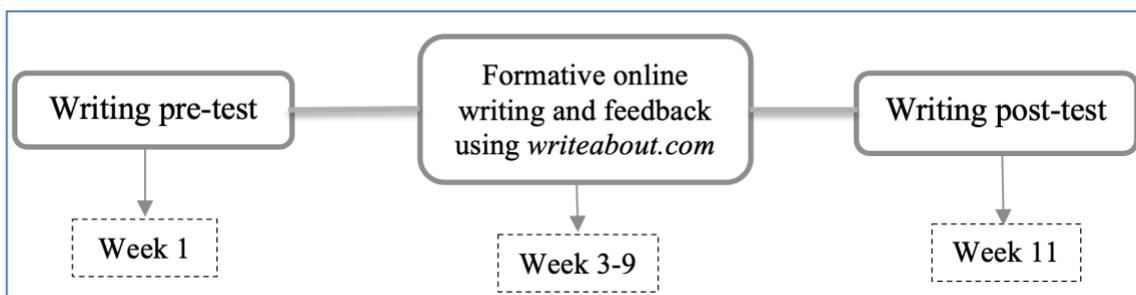


Figure 3. Study Design

Context and Participants

The total number of participants was 933 non-English-major students (77.6% female, 22.4% male) at one autonomous university in southern Thailand. The students majored in 28 academic programs, including Medical Technology, Electrical Engineering, Nursing Science, Political Science, Multimedia, and so forth. They ranged in age from 18 to 20 years old, with more than 5 years of English learning experience in formal school settings. The students took a university placement test named "Walailak University—Test of English Proficiency (WUTEP)". The test was created using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and Classical Test Theory (CTT). Approximately 6,000 college students have taken the WUTEP to assess their English proficiency since 2018. Previous English Language Teaching (ELT) studies used WUTEP as an instrument for assessing English proficiency levels, indicating the test's reliability (e.g., Khasanah & Anggoro, 2022; Waluyo & Bakoko, 2021). Based on the university placement test results, The majority of the subjects were at the Intermediate level (53%) with the bulk of the remaining students at the "Beginner" level. All the students owned smartphones and possessed digital literacy skills for academic purposes. Table 1 below presents the detailed information of the participants.

Table 1. Participant Information

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	186	22.4
	Male	645	77.6
Proficiency Level	Advanced	27	2.9
	Intermediate	497	53.3
	Beginner	334	35.8
	Remedial	10	1.1
	Unidentified	65	7.0
Total		933	100.0

Course Design and Research Procedure

Writeabout was integrated into the teaching and learning instruction of a general English course aimed at enhancing students' English skills in listening, reading, writing, and speaking concerning English in cultural diversity. Thus, the students were studying topics where diverse cultures may exist, such as studying abroad, festivals, airports, and others. For the writing lessons, the course implemented a blended teaching and learning approach to develop students' skills in prompted essay writing, where teachers lectured in class and students did their writing at home on *writeabout*; at some class meetings, teachers displayed students' writings in class on *writeabout* and gave feedback.

The general English course was taught by 24 English teachers, of which 4 were Thai and 20 were English teachers from other countries, such as the Philippines, India, Indonesia, and Iran. The English course used an organizational system in which each teacher was required to merely adhere to the criteria outlined in the teachers' manuals. The coordinators have given all teaching and learning resources, including the syllabus, assessments, and weekly learning activities. This was done to ensure that all the teachers provided the same level of instruction and learning activities.

The course lasted 12 weeks. In week 1, the students took the writing pretest that required them to write a short essay of 100–150 words. During the week, the students also received both the course introduction and brief training on how to use the *writeabout*. In weeks 2 and 3, teachers lectured on prompted essay writing and assisted students in choosing topics. The teachers had previously created a teacher account on the *writeabout*, and after the lecture, the teacher gave a brief introduction to the *writeabout*. Then, teachers distributed class codes to students and invited them to join their classes. Teachers can name and group students according to their regular classes on *writeabout*. At the end of the class, students chose their topics (Table 2) and were given one week before the next class to work on their writing. Teachers only needed to go to the class section and open each student's writing on *writeabout* to give feedback because students' accounts had been included in teachers' classes, focusing on the assessment rubric criteria, such as task achievement, grammar, vocabulary, logics, and mechanics

Table 2. Writing topics

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Topic: Airport <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nakhon Si Thammarat Airport b. The most exciting things to do at the airport c. Experience of meeting foreigners at the airport 2. Topic: Restaurant <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. My dream restaurant b. Experience of eating at international restaurants c. The restaurants Walailak University should have 3. Topic: Living Abroad <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The country I want to visit one day b. Pursuing a Master's degree in a foreign country c. A neighboring ASEAN country 4. Topic: Festival <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. My favorite festival b. Experience of attending a festival in a foreign country c. The festival I want to attend in the future |
|---|

In week 4, teachers provided asynchronous feedback on students' essays on *writeabout* for a week. Teachers gave general oral feedback in week 5's class, and students were told to open their writings and check the given feedback after class. Students can use a *writeabout* to edit their writings, track changes, and listen to recorded oral feedback delivered in English from teachers. Until week 9, all these activities were repeated. Students concentrated on writing, revising, and refining one prompt essay. Teachers' feedback on the criteria in the assessment rubrics, which were also the lessons in class, was emphasized. These lessons involved content, grammar, vocabulary, logic, and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). In week 10, students' essays were graded. In week 11, they had a prompted essay final writing test/post test.

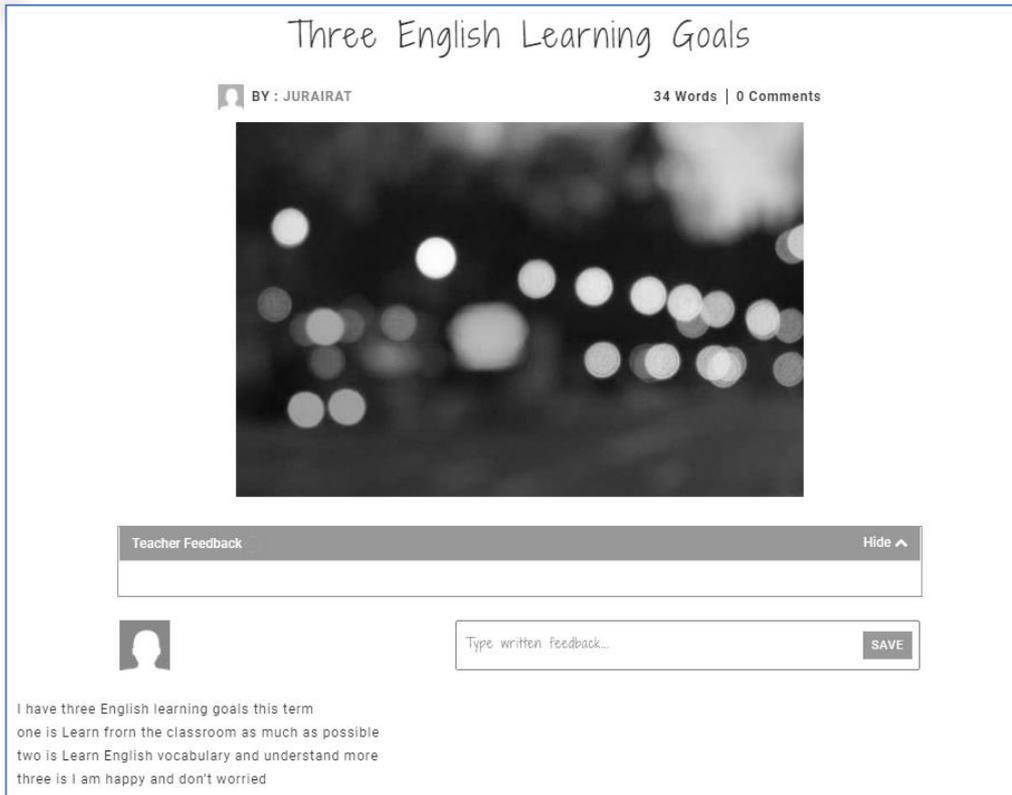


Figure 4. One of the Students' Writing Drafts with the Panel for Teacher Feedback

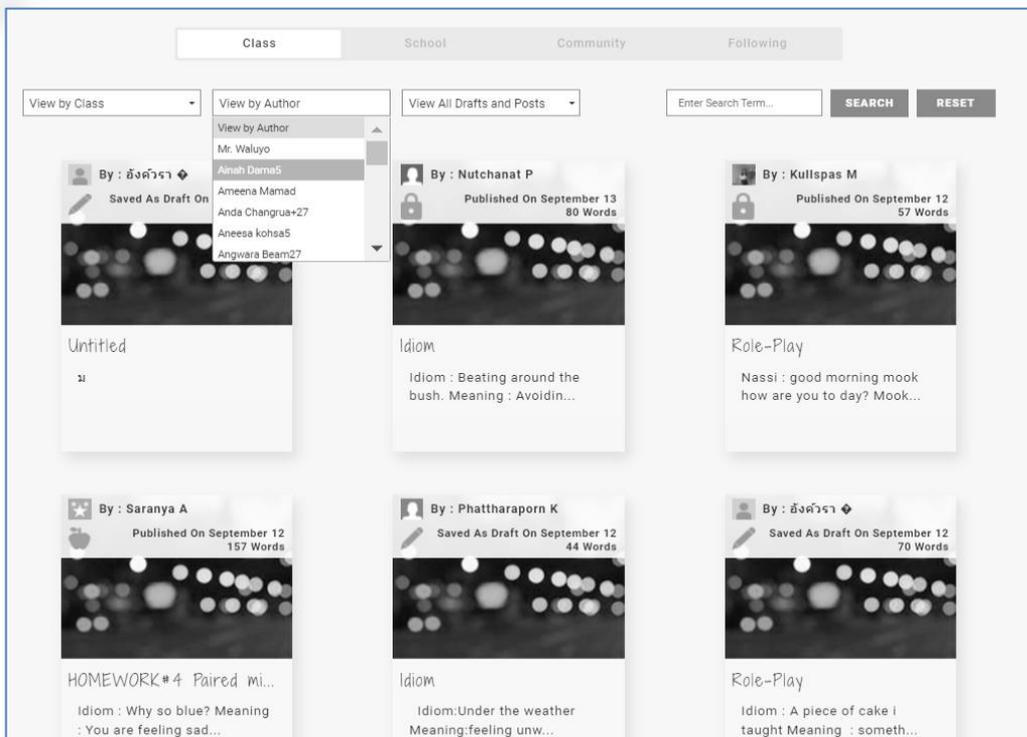


Figure 5. The Panel for Teachers to View the Students' Writing Drafts

Instruments and Measures

The instruments used in this study were primarily short, prompted essays (100-150 words). First, two different prompted essays were used for the pre- and posttests (final writing test). The same prompts could not be utilized for both pre- and post tests because students would simply regurgitate what they had written previously, compromising the study's outcomes. Hence, researchers created two prompts with comparable presentation patterns and topics covered in the course. It was thought that by doing so, the complexity of both prompts would be equivalent for the students.

The second instrument was a short-prompted essay writing task that the students worked on throughout the term, as explained earlier. Both instruments utilized a writing assessment rubric created by the course coordinator, as presented in Table 3. Prior to the commencement of the academic term, all the lecturers were given a course orientation, where they were trained to evaluate students' essays. To maintain objectivity during writing assessments, lecturers graded essays from classes they did not teach.

Table 3. Writing Assessment Rubric

No.	Criteria	Points			
		0.5	1	1.5	2
1	Task Achievement	The content is irrelevant to the chosen topic; does not meet the appropriate length	The content is occasionally relevant to the chosen topic; Has limited length	The content is relevant to the chosen topic most of the time; Meets the minimum length	The content is relevant to the chosen topic; Meets the appropriate length
2	Grammar	The essay has frequent grammatical inaccuracies and contains 0 or 1 prepositions/adjective s/wh-questions/be & verb in simple present	The essay has numerous grammatical inaccuracies and contains 2 prepositions/adjective s/wh-questions/be & verb in simple present	The essay has some grammatical inaccuracies and contains 3 prepositions/adjective s/wh-questions/be & verb in simple present	The essay has very few grammatical inaccuracies and contains 4 prepositions/a djectives/wh-questions/be & verb in simple present
3	Vocabulary	The essay shows very poor knowledge of words, word forms, and is not understandable	The essay shows a limited range of vocabulary and contains confusing words and word forms	The essay shows few misuses of vocabularies and forms, but not change the meaning	The essay shows effective choice of words and forms
4	Logics	The ideas lack cohesion and are not presented in a logical manner	The ideas are sometimes cohesive and presented in a logical manner	The ideas are mostly cohesive and presented in a logical manner	The ideas are cohesively arranged and presented in a logical manner
5	Mechanics (Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization)	The essay is dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization	The essay has frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization	The essay has occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization	The essay uses correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization

Aside from the two instruments, this study took the information on students' gender and proficiency levels from the university's database with the permission of the school. The obtained information enabled the researchers to create the variables of gender and proficiency levels to be included in the statistical analyses.

Data Analysis

The first research question was explored by using a paired-sample t test since it compared students' pre- and posttest results. Linear regression was also utilized to see if students' scores in the formative writing tasks could explain their achievement in the final writing tests. Then, the second research question was examined by using an independent t test to see if male and female students had different performances and one-way ANOVA to reveal if there were variances by English proficiency levels.

Results

A paired-sample t test was first performed to determine whether the implementation of formative online writing and feedback using *writeabout* made a difference in writing learning outcomes between the prewriting test and the postwriting test. The results displayed a significant improvement ($t(932) = 38.49, p < .001$) in students' mean scores between the pre- ($M = 3.26, SD = 2.16$) and posttest ($M = 6.10, SD = 1.73$). As seen in the means, from the pretest to the posttest, the students' scores increased by twofold. The effect size of *Cohen's d* was calculated to disclose the magnitude of the experimental effect: $Cohen's d = (6.1 - 3.26) / 1.956847 = 1.451314$. The effect size fell into the large category as it was higher than .8. All these results indicate the positive impacts of integrating formative online writing and feedback via *writeabout*.

To further explore the extent to which such integration could explain the students' learning outcomes in their postwriting test, the students' scores in formative online writing were regressed on their postwriting test scores. The results revealed that students' formative online writing scores could significantly predict their postwriting test ($F(932) = 11.03, p = .001, R^2 = .012$). Every one-unit increase in students' formative online writing scores can result in a .114 increase in their final writing achievement. Nonetheless, the effect size was small (f^2) at .0121. Figure 6 below presents the regression variable plots from online formative writing to the postwriting test.

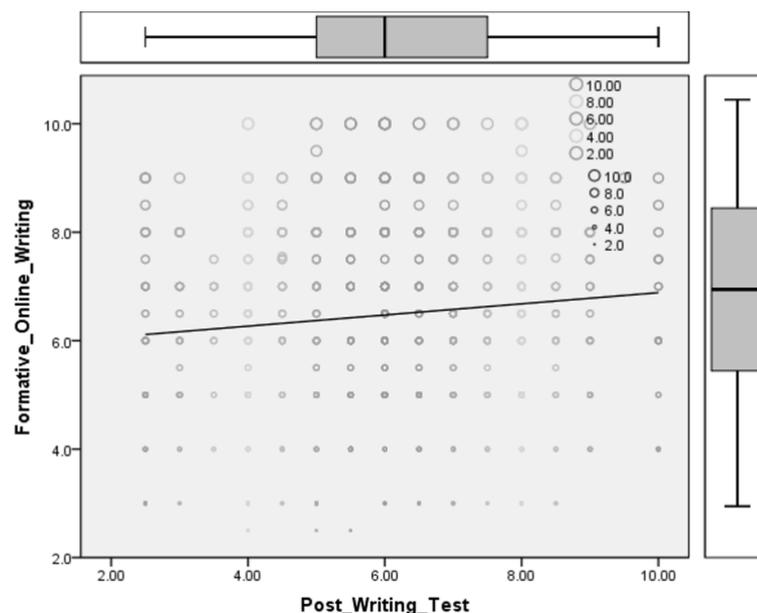


Figure 6. Regression Variable Plots

Next, independent t tests were run to determine whether female students outperformed male students or vice versa in the formative online writing scores and postwriting scores. The results showed that both female and male students achieved the same level of performance in the formative online writing task ($t(829) = .337, p = .736$) and the postwriting test ($t(829) = .546, p = .585$), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of independent t tests

	Levene's Test for		T-test for Equality of Means			Mean Difference
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Formative_Writing_Write About	2.924	.088	.337	829	.736	.0452
Post_Writing_Test	.986	.321	.546	829	.585	.0792

Following that, a one-way ANOVA was chosen to determine whether students with varying levels of proficiency performed differently during the research treatment. First, the results showed that significant differences were noticed in students' formative online writing scores both between and within groups ($F(932) = 67.36, p < .001$). Then, the *Tukey post hoc test* was conducted, and the results demonstrated that students with higher proficiency outperformed those with lower proficiency; advanced-level students performed the best, followed by intermediate-, beginner-, and remedial-level students, as shown in Table 5. Second, significant differences, nonetheless, were not observed in the posttest writing scores ($F(932) = .699, p = .592$) between and within groups, meaning that students' proficiency levels did not play a role in their posttest writing outcomes. Between the pre- and post-tests, students were involved in formative writing activities that involved feedback and revisions, which might have prepared and developed students' writing skills, thereby improving their posttest writing results. These two results suggest that formative writing activities involving feedback and revisions have the potential to bring all students, regardless of their proficiency levels, to the same level of knowledge and comprehension, allowing them to perform equally on final writing tests.

Table 5. Tukey Post hoc Results

Dependent Variable	Levels	Levels	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Formative_Online_Writing	Unidentified	1	.2654	.4925	.983
		2	.1536	.1966	.936
		3	-1.1937*	.1913	.000
		4	-3.1476*	.3320	.000
	Remedial	0	-.2654	.4925	.983
		2	-.1118	.4653	.999
		3	-1.4591*	.4631	.014
		4	-3.4130*	.5368	.000
	Beginner	0	-.1536	.1966	.936
		1	.1118	.4653	.999
		3	-1.3473*	.1026	.000
		4	-3.3011*	.2901	.000
	Intermediate	0	1.1937*	.1913	.000
		1	1.4591*	.4631	.014
		2	1.3473*	.1026	.000
		4	-1.9539*	.2865	.000
	Advanced	0	3.1476*	.3320	.000
		1	3.4130*	.5368	.000
		2	3.3011*	.2901	.000
		3	1.9539*	.2865	.000

Note. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Discussion

The study's first objective was to examine the learning outcomes of an English course that integrated formative online writing and feedback through the use of *writeabout*. The results indicated a substantial improvement in students' pre- and posttest scores, showing that the research intervention had a beneficial influence on the learning process. Moreover, students' success during formative online writing tasks could be a strong predictor of their final writing test achievement. These findings corroborate prior research examining the beneficial effects of incorporating weblog websites/applications into an English writing course (Orhan-Karsak, 2020; Sulistyono et al., 2019). Waluyo (2018) recently investigated the effects of vocabulary acquisition on students' writing development with the assistance of *writeabout*, and Waluyo (2020b) confirmed the integration of multiple e-learning technologies into an English course, for example, the integration of *writeabout* into writing lessons, with encouraging results. The current study's findings underline the need to include formative writing tasks and feedback via an online application such as *writeabout*, which provides practical guidance for an English teacher considering using the application in writing classes. Other e-learning technologies were employed in the English course investigated in this study to enhance student learning experiences in other skills, such as Socrative for vocabulary assessments, YouTube for listening and speaking activities, Kahoot for grammatical practices, and so forth.

Teachers' corrective feedback was given in the form of written comments on the appropriateness or correctness of students' English output or comprehension in their online essays, as is customary in face-to-face instruction (Li & Vuono, 2019). It was accomplished by providing notes on the mistakes made by students, as well as instruction and hints on the proper target English forms, applying Ellis' concepts (2009). The writing assessment rubrics, which included five criteria, task achievement, grammar, vocabulary, logic, and mechanics, were utilized as reference points for the intended writing development skills. The positive findings support the argument that ICT tools can be useful for implementing online formative writing if the emphasis is on providing formative and immediate feedback, engaging students in critical learning processes (e.g., collaborative interactions and self-regulation), and encouraging equitable education by fostering responsive teaching and assessment and facilitating progressive learning (e.g., Gikandi et al., 2011).

The second objective was to prove whether gender and proficiency levels would affect students' learning outcomes as a result of the research intervention. The results did not validate the assumption that female students would outperform their counterparts, and vice versa. These results were intriguing because some of the previous studies pointed out that female students would always perform better in writing achievements (e.g., Cahyono & Rahayu, 2020; Pajares et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2019). These second findings may add to the understanding that, regardless of gender, students would likely perform equally well in writing lessons implementing online formative writing and feedback. On the other hand, the current study found that students' English proficiency levels were still influential and became a differential in students' writing outcomes, which sustains the findings from earlier studies (e.g., Maleki & Zangani, 2007; Sasaki, 2004).

When all students are at the same level of English proficiency, an online writing class outperforms those with in-class writing instruction (Arslan & Şahin-Kızıllı, 2010). In some ELT environments, having students with comparable skill levels is difficult due to a variety of factors, such as the institution's policy and large disparities in the number of

high- and low-level students. One strategy for reducing the impact of English proficiency on students' writing skill development is to focus on how technologies are integrated and writing skills are imagined (Hew & Cheung, 2013). For example, Hwang et al. (2014) used mobile devices to incorporate online writing in a situational learning system. Students in the experimental group used mobile devices to complete EFL writing assignments in specific and familiar subject environments, simulating real-life scenarios or contexts. Meanwhile, the control group carried out EFL writing with picture support in the classroom using a paper-and-pen method. The trial results revealed a considerable difference in learning achievement between the two groups. Students in the experimental group thought the designed activities were enjoyable, so they were more likely to remain interested in contextual learning settings.

Conclusion, Implication, and Limitations

The findings of this study have pedagogical implications. To begin, incorporating an online website/application such as a *writeabout* into an English writing class would allow teachers to develop a blended learning approach with online formative writing and feedback that could be done synchronously or asynchronously. There have been studies that confirmed the beneficial effects of using nonwriting designed applications, such as Padlet (Kharis et al., 2020) and Whatsapp (Suhaimi et al., 2019), on students' writing achievements, implying that specific writing designed applications, such as *writeabout*, should help students achieve similar, if not better, results. Nonetheless, the impact of formative activities and feedback should be recognized in this study, as the application alone is unlikely to achieve these favorable results. Formative writing activities mediated by online websites have been implemented (Cope et al., 2011; Gikandi et al., 2011; Mohamadi, 2018), making them a highly recommended activity. Teachers were urged in the current study to integrate their comments with the assessment rubrics, which generated specific settings for students. According to Zhu et al. (2020), students' increased writing performance may be related to their improved formative writing scores; for example, students with higher beginning scores were more likely to revise after feedback. In this example, contextualized feedback was found to be more effective in aiding with learning.

Another conclusion of the findings is that, given that learning instructions that incorporate an online application require teachers to pay attention to students' English proficiency levels, the learning outcomes may be congruent with students' proficiency levels. This study recommends that teachers identify students' proficiency levels early on so that they can be appropriately grouped and given feedback based on their English competence. While it makes sense that low-level pupils would require additional attention and aid from teachers, their gender should have no bearing on their learning achievements, as demonstrated in this study.

To recap, *writeabout* has the potential to be integrated into an English writing class by providing formative online writing tasks that are enhanced by teacher feedback. Female and male students would likely achieve similar learning outcomes, yet their proficiency levels could produce significant differences. However, two of these findings are circumstantial. It lacked qualitative data that could have provided additional insight into individual students' reactions to the research intervention. Therefore, future research should incorporate qualitative explorations to determine whether comparable outcomes can be obtained. Furthermore, the teachers in this study were non-Thai nationals who taught Thai EFL students. If domestic English teachers had been included, the results might have been different, which could be investigated further in future research.

About the Authors

Budi Waluyo is an Assistant Professor of English Language Teaching at the School of Languages and General Education, Walailak University, Thailand. He finished his M.A. at the University of Manchester, U.K., and his Ph.D. at Lehigh University, U.S.A. He received an International Fellowship Program from the Ford Foundation, USA, and a Fulbright Presidential Scholarship from the U.S. government. His research interests involve education policy, educational technology, ELT, and international education. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1919-2068

Aisah Apridayani (Corresponding Author) is a full-time English lecturer in the English Department at the School of Liberal Arts, Walailak University, Thailand. She finished her M.A. at Prince of Songkla University, Thailand. Her research interests include English language teaching and learning, self-regulated learning, English self-efficacy, writing strategies, and learning strategies. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6794-9590

Safnil Arsyad is a professor in Applied Linguistics at the English Education Postgraduate Program of the Education Faculty of the University of Bengkulu, Indonesia. His research interest is in the discourse analysis of academic texts. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4174-2556

To Cite this Article

Waluyo, B., Apridayani, A. & Arsyad, S (2023). Using Writeabout as a Tool for Online Writing and Feedback. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ)*, 26 (3). <https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.26104int>

References

- Apridayani, A., Yungkun, N., Thoch, K. & Rukthong, A. (2021). Writing strategies for argumentative essay and short research reports: The case of Thai EFL learners. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 18(1), 300-309. <https://doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2021.18.1.21.300>
- Arslan, R. Ş., & Şahin-Kızıl, A. (2010). How can the use of blog software facilitate the writing process of English language learners?. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 23(3), 183-197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2010.486575>
- Cahyono, B. Y., & Rahayu, T. (2020). EFL students' motivation in writing, writing proficiency, and gender. *TEFLIN Journal*, 31(2), 162-180. <https://doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v31i2/162-180>
- Carpenter, J. P. & Justice, J. E. (2017). Can technology support teaching for global readiness? The case of the Global Read Aloud. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 11(1), 65-85. <https://doi.org/10.36510/learnland.v11i1.923>
- Chen, W. C. (2014). Actual and preferred teacher feedback on student blog writing. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 30(4). <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.635>
- Cheng, K. H., Liang, J. C. & Tsai, C. C. (2015). Examining the role of feedback messages in undergraduate students' writing performance during an online peer assessment activity. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 25, 78-84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2015.02.001>
- Chuo, T. W. I. (2007). The effects of the WebQuest writing instruction program on EFL learners' writing Performance, writing Apprehension, and perception. *Tesl-ej*, 11(3), 1-27. <https://tesl-ej.org/ej43/a3.html>

- Cope, B., Kalantzis, M., McCarthey, S., Vojak, C. & Kline, S. (2011). Technology-mediated writing assessments: Principles and processes. *Computers and Composition*, 28(2), 79-96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2011.04.007>
- Ellis, R. (2009). Corrective feedback and teacher development. *L2 Journal*, 1(1), 3-18.
- Fernando, W. (2018). Show me your true colors: Scaffolding formative academic literacy assessment through an online learning platform. *Assessing Writing*, 36, 63-76. <https://doi.org/10.5070/12.v1i1.9054>
- Fernando, W. (2020). Moodle quizzes and their usability for formative assessment of academic writing. *Assessing Writing*, 46, 100485. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2020.100485>
- Fryer, L. K. & Ginns, P. (2018). A reciprocal test of perceptions of teaching quality and approaches to learning: A longitudinal examination of teaching-learning connections. *Educational Psychology*, 38(8), 1032-1049. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335602340>
- Gikandi, J. W., Morrow, D. & Davis, N. E. (2011). Online formative assessment in higher education: A review of the literature. *Computers & Education*, 57(4), 2333-2351. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.06.004>
- Grigoryan, A. (2017). Feedback 2.0 in online writing instruction: Combining audio-visual and text-based commentary to enhance student revision and writing competency. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 29(3), 451-476. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12528-017-9152-2>
- Hew, K. F. & Cheung, W. S. (2013). Use of Web 2.0 technologies in K-12 and higher education: The search for evidence-based practice. *Educational Research Review*, 9(-), 47-64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2012.08.001>
- Hwang, W. Y., Chen, H. S., Shadiev, R., Huang, R. Y. M. & Chen, C. Y. (2014). Improving English as a foreign language writing in elementary schools using mobile devices in familiar situational contexts. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 27(5), 359-378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2012.733711>
- Kharis, M., Ebner, M., Wijayati, P., Hidayat, E. & Afifah, L. (2020). Microblogging with Padlet: Students' New Writing Experience on A2–B1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (iJET)*, 15(1), 176-187. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v15i01.11804>
- Khasanah, U. & Anggoro, K. J. (2022). Accessible flipped classroom model for pronunciation instruction: Its effectiveness and students' perception. *International Journal of Instruction*, 15(1), 185-196. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2022.15111a>
- Knight, S., Shibani, A., Abel, S., Gibson, A., Ryan, P., Sutton, N., Wight, R., Lucas, C., Sándor, Á., Kitto, K., Liu, M., Vijay Mogarkar, R. & Buckingham Shum, S. (2020). Acawriter: A learning analytics tool for formative feedback on academic writing. *Journal of Writing Research*, 12(1), 141-186. <https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2020.12.01.06>
- Lee, I. (2017). *Classroom writing assessment and feedback in L2 school contexts*. Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-10-3924-9>

- Li, S. & Vuono, A. (2019). Twenty-five years of research on oral and written corrective feedback in System. *System*, 84, 93-109. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.05.006>
- Lucas, C., Gibson, A. & Shum, S. B. (2019). Pharmacy students' utilization of an online tool for immediate formative feedback on reflective writing tasks. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 83(6). <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe6800>
- Maleki, A. & Zangani, E. (2007). A survey on the relationship between English language proficiency and the academic achievement of Iranian EFL students. *Asian EFL Journal*, 9(1), 86-96. https://www.asian-efl-journal.com/March_2007_EBook.pdf
- Mohamadi, Z. (2018). Comparative effect of online summative and formative assessment on EFL student writing ability. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 59, 29-40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2018.02.003>
- Nobles, S. & Paganucci, L. (2015). Do digital writing tools deliver? Student perceptions of writing quality using digital tools and online writing environments. *Computers and Composition*, 38, 16-31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2015.09.001>
- Orhan-Karsak, H. G. (2020). The Effectiveness of Weblogs on Writing Tendency. In *Enriching Teaching and Learning Environments with Contemporary Technologies* (pp. 61-84). IGI Global.
- Pajares, F., Valiante, G. & Cheong, Y. F. (2006). Writing self-efficacy and its relation to gender, writing motivation and writing competence: A developmental perspective. In *Writing and motivation* (pp. 141-159). Brill.
- Panmi, B. & Waluyo, B. (2021). Writing classes with Writeabout.com: Learning mode, feedback, and collaboration. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 12(4), 397-402. <https://doi.org/10.37237/120406>
- Sasaki, M. (2004). A Multiple-data analysis of the 3.5-year development of EFL student writers. *Language Learning*, 54(3), 525-582. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0023-8333.2004.00264.x>
- Shute, V. J. & Rahimi, S. (2017). Review of computer-based assessment for learning in elementary and secondary education. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 33(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12172>
- Suhaimi, N. D., Mohamad, M. & Yamat, H. (2019). The effects of whatsapp in teaching narrative writing: A case study. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 7(4), 590-602. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.7479>
- Sulistyo, T., Mukminatien, N., Cahyono, B. Y. & Saukah, A. (2019). Enhancing Learners' Writing Performance through Blog-Assisted Language Learning. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 14(9). <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v14i09.9535>
- Tian, L. & Zhou, Y. (2020). Learner engagement with automated feedback, peer feedback and teacher feedback in an online EFL writing context. *System*, 91, 102247. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102247>
- Waluyo, B. (2018). Vocabulary acquisition through self-regulated learning on speaking and writing development. *International Journal of Language Teaching and Education*, 2(3), 286-302. <https://doi.org/10.22437/ijolte.v2i3.5747>

- Waluyo, B. (2020a). Thai EFL learners' WTC in English: Effects of ICT support, learning orientation, and cultural perception. *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies*, 477-514. <https://doi.org/10.14456/hasss.2020.18>
- Waluyo, B. (2020b). Learning outcomes of a general English course implementing multiple e-learning technologies and active learning concepts. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 17(1), 160. <https://doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2020.17.1.10.160>
- Waluyo, B. & Bakoko, R. (2021). Academic vocabulary used by high school students in essays and its relation to English proficiency. *3L: Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 27(4). <https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2021-2704-12>
- White, E. (2019). (Re) visiting twenty-five years of writing assessment. *Assessing Writing*, 42, 100419. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2019.100419>
- Wigglesworth, G. & Storch, N. (2012). What role for collaboration in writing and writing feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 21(4), 364–374. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2012.09.005>
- Williams, C. & Beam, S. (2019). Technology and writing: Review of research. *Computers & Education*, 128, 227–242. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.09.024>
- Wilson, B. (2018). Write About's Vision and Mission. <https://writeabouthelp.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/115000368374-Write-About-s-Vision-and-Mission>
- Zhang, M., Bennett, R. E., Deane, P. & Rijn, P. W. (2019). Are there gender differences in how students write their essays? An analysis of writing processes. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 38(2), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emip.12249>
- Zhang, Z. V. & Hyland, K. (2018). Student engagement with teacher and automated feedback on L2 writing. *Assessing Writing*, 36, 90–102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2018.02.004>
- Zhu, M., Liu, O. L. & Lee, H. S. (2020). The effect of automated feedback on revision behavior and learning gains in formative assessment of scientific argument writing. *Computers & Education*, 143, 103668. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2019.103668>

Copyright of articles rests with the authors. Please cite TESL-EJ appropriately.