

# THE USE OF JOURNALS TO DEVELOP GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY IN WRITING

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## Abstract

*The researcher proposes, in this paper, her action research with a quasi quantitative and qualitative design, to provide some important insights into the use of journal writing as a means to improve grammatical accuracy of first-year university Thai undergraduates with no prior exposure to journal writing in English. The data on the undergraduates' grammatical accuracy were analyzed through their journal entries covering both dialogue-journaling and process-writing entries, while their opinions of journal entries and grammatical accuracy were obtained through their dialogue journaling entries and interview responses. Findings are discussed, and recommendations for future research are made. It is also hoped that journal writing can be another useful learning activity and a teaching alternative to enhance EFL undergraduates' grammatical accuracy in English.*

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## Introduction

In Thailand, English is a required foreign language taught as a compulsory subject in the curricula of schools, colleges and universities. Although the concept of communicative competence is promoted in one of the educational standards for Thai learners from school to university levels, Thai learners are still having difficulty in using English to communicate, particularly in writing (Ministry of Education 2002, Office of the National Education Commission 2001, 2002).

One of the barriers to writing performance in English for most Thai learners is that they lack the ability to use appropriate grammar in their English language writing. They still have difficulty both in applying the grammatical rules of English in order to form grammatically correct sentences, and in knowing when and where to use these sentences and to whom in writing (Harmer 1985, Lush 2002). Moreover, although they have studied English tenses since primary school, only a few of them can apply their grammatical knowledge in communicative use (Pongsiriwet 2001, Intratat 2004, Charoenroop 2006).

Since the development of ELT, particularly in Thailand, emphasizes interactive language learning and teaching through authentically communicative activities connecting classroom learning with real-life learning (Edelsky 1993, Brown 2000), journal writing as a particular writing activity suits this emphasis (Dam and Legenhausen 1999, Müller-Verweyen 1999, Nunan 1999, Nunan et al. 1999, Burton and Carroll 2001, Vickers and Ene 2006). Studies of journal writing as a means of promoting grammatical accuracy of verb tense use by

non-native English learners have been few in EFL, particularly in a Thai context (Quirke 2001, Honsa and Ratanapinyowong 2005). Hence, this article shares how to use journals in the processes of the action research (AR) cycle and reports shared opinions on the use of journals to improve the grammatical accuracy of 10 first-year Thai undergraduates who had no prior exposure to journal writing in English in the Thai EFL setting.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Grammatical accuracy**

In writing, grammatical accuracy is essential to ensure the writer's intended meaning and to avoid communicative misunderstanding (Lush 2002, Larsen-Freeman 2003). In the Thai EFL context, Thai learners still have problems with verb tense accuracy. Learners frequently make tense errors in their writing though verb tense is one of the most important aspects of grammatical knowledge that non-native English language learners should master (Pongsiriwet 2001, Lush 2002, Intratat 2004, Charoenroop 2006).

In English, a sentence cannot exist without a verb (Master 1996). The form of a verb represents 'tense', which shows past, present, or future time (Davis and Liss 2006). When students write an essay, tense is very important (Master 1996, Davis and Liss 2006, Roehampton 2008). The use of grammar tenses differs based on types of discourse (Van Dijk 1988 and Fowler 1991 cited in Posteguillo and Palmer 2000). Master (1996) and Byrd and Benson (2001) point out that in general, the individual tenses contain several functions in discourse. Larsen-Freeman

(2003) points out that although form, meaning and use are interrelated, each of them can appear diversely challenging for language learners. A challenge may be in the case that a learner knows how to form a grammatical structure but doesn't realize that the structure includes more than one meaning and can be used in different situations.

In this AR study, grammatical accuracy refers to the first-year Thai undergraduates' ability to use verb tenses (i.e., past, present, and future tenses) accurately interpreted through content analyses of their journal entries.

### **Journal Writing (JW)**

*"All great writing is deeply personal and heartfelt. Teachers need to provide learners with opportunities to write about topics that are relevant to their lives and to feel that their writing has value."*  
(Nadine Gordimer 1982, cited in Bello, 1997)

JW is a tool of the 'write to learn' concept in that it improves learners' writing skills and simultaneously provides a chance for them to reflect on their learning (Cobine 1995, Hogan 1995, Brown 1985b cited in Oxford 1996, Freeman 1998, Burton and Carroll 2001, O'Leary Wanket 2005). Given the nature of AR, JW has an interactive role in the learning-teaching process in revealing unobservable aspects of classroom experience (e.g., psychological factors: learning strategies; affective factors: attitudes, anxiety and motivation; or even learners' tacit knowledge and their problematic situations); thus, a teacher can better understand learners' psycho-affective conditions and their learning process (Allwright 1983, Bailey 1983, Genesee and Upshur 1996, Nunan 1999, Marefat

2002, Rubin 2003, Lê 2006, Altrichter et al. 2008).

Journals, in this study, cover the features of dialogue journaling and process writing. Both dialogue journaling and process writing are experience-based and assigned as out-of-class activities. Regarding the main purpose of JW in the study, accuracy in grammar is focused on and assessed through the instructor's indirect feedback (i.e., clued underlining of grammatical errors with written correction symbols) and the students' self-correction (Appendix A).

### **Dialogue journaling**

Given the importance of reflection, journals are categorized as an important introspective tool based on the process of observing and reflecting on learners' thoughts, feelings, motives, reasoning processes, and mental states influencing behavior (Nunan 1999, Bailey and Oschner 1983 cited in Bailey et al. 2001). Journals serve important pedagogical purposes as an interactive tool: using writing as a 'thinking' process, and communication like 'dialogue journals.' Keeping dialogue journals creates a mutual relationship between student(s) and teacher in a nonthreatening environment, and this can bring about autonomous learning (Staton 1987, Dam and Legenhausen 1999, Vygotsky 1978 cited in Burton and Carroll 2001, Trites 2001, Brown 2004).

As reflection is a mode of acquisition leading to autonomous learning, language learners have to be aware of how they learn (i.e., reflection on their strengths/weaknesses and progress in various linguistic skills), and this is a prerequisite for independent learning

(Dam and Legenhausen 1999, Marefat 2002, Vickers and Ene 2006). Moreover, the new learning situation can force the learners to rely more on themselves and their own experience than when they are operating within the classroom context (Dam and Legenhausen 1999, Müller-Verweyen 1999).

### **Process writing**

In this study, students wrote on memorable experiences or events, either pleasant or unpleasant, in order to generate as many ideas as possible (Oshima and Hogue 2006). Each written task in JW was planned and organized through the 'cyclical' steps of generating ideas, rereading, drafting, revising, editing, and rewriting, which constitute '*process writing*' (Li Wai Shing 1992, Sokolik 2003).

The use of the process writing approach is more effective than other approaches in terms of improving writing attitudes and written tasks since writing is a cognitive task developing writers intellectually and emotionally (Li Wai Shing 1992, Appel 1995, Bello 1997, Oshima and Hogue 2006, Pritchard and Honeycutt 2007). In addition, the feature of self-selected topics of interest in JW provided students in this study with freedom of choice, which is necessary for students to develop their talents in narrative writing (Rogers 1969 cited in Groundwater-Smith et al. 2007), and it improves student motivation in the language learning process in accordance with Maslow's human needs (Huddleston and Unwin 2008).

### **Grammatical accuracy and JW**

The issue of accuracy is applicable to JW since JW has proven effective in

stimulating the natural interaction of language use in ESL and EFL students to further linguistic development (Carroll and Swain 1993, Cobine 1995, Quirke 2001, Honsa and Ratanapinyowong 2005, Vickers and Ene 2006). In addition, writing progress has been principally measured by accuracy although JW emphasizes fluency in writing content and ideas (Allwright 1983, Bailey 1983, Genesee and Upshur 1996, Bello 1997, Trites 2001, Marefat 2002, Brown 2004, O'Leary Wanket 2005, Lê 2006, Oshima and Hogue 2007) because learners' errors could signify an effective step towards improving grammatical accuracy (Carroll and Swain 1993, Ivanic 1995 cited in Carroll and Mchawala 2001).

### Action research methodology

The quasi quantitative and qualitative design (Creswell 2003) can be applied to the main processes of the AR cycle (Burns 1999: 33 and 2007): planning, acting, observing and reflecting as depicted in Figure 1.

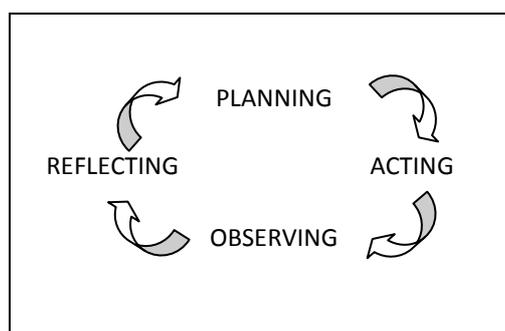


Figure 1: Action Research Cycle

This study is conducted parallel to the AR process cycle as follows.

### Phase 1: Planning process

#### (a) Exploring problem and identifying concern

The researcher was interested in helping her students develop their grammatical knowledge through authentic writing after discovering the following results from her initial survey. The survey was carried out with all 32 first-year Thai undergraduates of her class in the 2008 academic year, utilizing a *Student's Reflection* questionnaire (Appendix B). The results pointed out that the students perceived grammar (81%) followed by writing (75%) as the most difficult skills of academic English. Since none of the students had prior exposure to JW, she was curious about what they thought about JW and its effect on their grammatical ability if they had a chance to write journals. Her investigation was guided by the research question:

“What are the students’ opinions of the use of journals as a means to improve their grammatical ability?”

#### (b) Planning action

In the first term of the 2008 academic year, this study was conducted in the researcher's class with a total of 32 first-year Thai undergraduates from the Department of Statistics in the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Chulalongkorn University. Concerning the ethical issues, all the 32 undergraduates were supposed to have an equal opportunity for participating in the entire JW treatment. However, in fact, ten out of 32 undergraduates: seven females (70%) and three males (30%) were randomly selected as the participants of the study.

The students were further divided into two groups: 'high-achievers' and 'low-achievers' based on their grammatical scores on the verb-tense test. With its reliability index of .81, the test, developed by the researcher, was conducted prior to the introduction of JW treatment. Within these two groups, the 10 students (i.e., 5 in each group) were selected for in-depth data analyses: quantitative (i.e., grammatical accuracy) analysis on JW and qualitative (i.e., the students' opinions) analysis on the dialogue-journal entries and an interview.

### **Phase 2: Acting process**

The data were collected over thirteen weeks from June to September 2008 through:

#### **Dialogue journaling**

Dialogue journaling was introduced after the distribution of the *Student's Reflection* questionnaire and the *test*. The worksheets of the dialogue journaling guideline on how they reflected on their learning of grammar, and of the interpretation of correction symbols on grammatical errors were distributed and explained to the students.

The dialogue-journal entries were assigned twice a week for four weeks as an out-of-class activity. Before the weekly submission, students were required to edit their own entries. Each dialogue journal with the teacher's indirect feedback (i.e., clued underlining of grammatical errors with correction symbols) (See Appendix A), focusing on grammatical tense form, meaning, and use (Larsen-Freeman 2003) (See Appendix C), was returned and

discussed with the students during the next session of the class the following week.

In the processes of dialogue journaling, neither word length in JW nor scoring assessment was required; only the guideline on dialogue-journal writing was, since dialogue journaling was expected to initiate and familiarize the students into the world of the reflective genre of JW.

#### **Process writing**

At the beginning of the week after the midterm break when the students may have had, to some extent, experience with JW, the students then changed to process writing. The worksheets of the optional topics, of process-writing guidelines, and of the writing rubrics (i.e., content, organization, and grammar) for process writing were provided and explained to the students prior to the implementation of the process writing. Each JW entry was implemented by means of cyclical process writing.

The student volunteers were assigned to write three-topic essays during the limited five-week duration of the process-writing activity. Each choice of the three topics was based on the students' interests since one assigned topic selected by an instructor cannot fit all students' needs for generating ideas in writing (Ferris and Hedgcock 2005). Each narrative essay was supposed to be submitted to the researcher on a weekly basis. Before submitting each essay, the students were required to do self-editing of their own JW entries. The teacher's feedback on the students' JW was provided and discussed during the next class session of the following week.

Only the final version of each three-topic essay was co-scored by the researcher and

a native English instructor. There were totally thirty process-writing entries (i.e., the 10 students' three-topic final-versioned essays) that both instructors needed to score. The average writing score given by the instructors was provided on the basis of the writing content, organization and grammar. The inter-rater reliability between rater 1 (i.e., the native-English instructor) and rater 2 (i.e., the researcher) was strongly correlated ( $r = .982, p < .01$ ).

### Interview

An interview was conducted with the ten students to assess their opinions towards JW and its effect on grammatical ability in the last week after the completion of the JW treatment.

### Phase 3: Observing process

This parallel process to the acting process is also involved in the procedures for the study's data collection. The data gathered on the students' grammatical accuracy were analyzed through their JW (i.e., dialogue journaling and process writing entries), and those on their 'opinions' of JW and grammatical accuracy were through their dialogue journaling entries and interview responses.

The data on the students' grammatical accuracy and their opinions about JW and grammatical accuracy are quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed and presented in Tables 1 to 4.

### 3.1 Grammatical accuracy

The analyses of JW, focusing on the grammatical accuracy in verb tenses, of high (H) and low (L) achievers are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Analyses on high and low achievers' JW

<i>JW</i> (a) + (b)		<i>The Use of Verb Tenses in JW (nH = 5; nL = 5)</i>						
		<i>Present</i>		<i>Past</i>			<i>Future</i>	
		<i>PreSim</i>	<i>PrePerf</i>	<i>PtSim</i>	<i>PtCont</i>	<i>PtPerf</i>	<i>FutSim</i>	
<b>(a) Dialogue Journaling</b>		5H/5L	4H/1L	5H/5L	1H/-	2H/-	5H/3L	
<i>Teacher Feedback</i>		<b>-Errors:</b> Wrong tense: 4H/5L						
<b>(b) Process Writing</b> <i>No. of Topics</i>		1	4H/5L	2H/2L	5H/3L	-/-	1H/-	1H/1L
		2	5H/2L	2H/-	4H/5L	-/-	1H/1L	1H/1L
		3	5H/4L	- /1L	3H/4L	1H/-	1H/-	4H/2L
<i>Teacher Feedback</i>		<b>-Errors:</b> Wrong tense: 3H/4L						

Note: nH is the number of high achievers; nL is the number of low achievers.

Table 1 indicates that high achievers appeared to use more varied tenses in both dialogue journaling and process writing. It can be noticed that high achievers could implement all and more verb tenses (i.e., present simple, past simple, present perfect, past perfect, past progressive, and future simple) whereas low achievers frequently implemented only a few verb tenses (i.e., present simple, past simple, and future simple) in JW. To illustrate, in the dialogue-journal writing, there were two high achievers using the past perfect tense while none of the low achievers used the past perfect tense.

Furthermore, low achievers tended to make more grammatical errors in both dialogue journaling and process writing. Regarding teacher feedback on verb-tense errors, it was found that the number of low achievers making tense errors in dialogue journaling and process writing was higher than that of high achievers.

However, through the elaboration of each genre of JW, the analyses of ‘dialogue journaling’ in terms of grammatical accuracy were quite similar in both groups of the achievers. What the researcher observed is that although they had practiced dialogue-journal writing and received teacher feedback during the processes of the treatment, almost all of them still made similar grammatical tense errors in terms of ‘form’ (e.g., subject-verb agreement in present and past tenses: “We was working...”; and wrong conjugations of past-tense irregular verbs: “I telled...”), ‘meaning’ (e.g., the use of present tense replacing past tense for their past events), and ‘use’ (i.e., wrong use of tense types and modes; and unparallel use of the past-tense verbs within the same situations and/or the same written tasks).

The grammatical analyses of the high and low achievers’ ‘process writing’ are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Average grammatical scores of high and low achievers’ final-draft in process writing

Achievers	<i>Process Writing: Average Score of Grammar (10)</i>					
	<i>Topic 1</i>	<i>Topic 2</i>	<i>Development (From Topics 1 to 2)</i>	<i>Topic 2</i>	<i>Topic 3</i>	<i>Development (From Topics 2 to 3)</i>
High (n = 5)	8.05	8.1	(↑ 0.05)	8.1	8.2	(↑ 0.1)
Low (n = 5)	5.2	6.75	(↑ 1.55)	6.75	6.35	(↓ 0.4)

Considering the average scores of grammar in process writing between the groups of achievers, the mean scores on grammar from writing topics 1 to 3 for the high achievers (i.e., 8.05, 8.1, and 8.2, respectively) were evidently much higher than those for the low achievers (i.e., 5.2, 6.75, and 6.35, respectively) as illustrated in Table 2. The higher grammatical scores of the high achievers’ all three written topics

may be on account of the more varied use of tense types (Table 1).

Moreover, when taking the development sequence in the average grammatical scores in process writing (Table 2), no statistically significant development sequence in grammar from three writing tasks was found in either group of achievers. However, there was likely more grammatical development in low achievers

(i.e., from 5.2 in Topic 1 to 6.35 in Topic 3) than in high achievers (i.e., from 8.05 in Topic 1 to 8.2 in Topic 3).

### 3.2 Opinions of grammatical accuracy and JW

The students' opinions of JW and its effect on their grammatical ability can be interpreted through the content analyses on their dialogue journaling entries and their interview responses.

#### 3.2.1 Students' dialogue journals

The content analyses on dialogue journals in both groups of achievers point out that individual English skills and learning situation components (e.g., course instructor, learning materials, time constraints, and external factors outside the class) could affect both high and low achievers' opinions of grammatical accuracy and their readiness towards grammatical learning as categorized from the dialogue-journal extracts in Table 3.

Table 3: Factors affecting opinions of the use of JW on grammatical ability: Dialogue-journal extracts

<i>Factors Affecting Opinions towards Grammatical Accuracy</i>	<i>Achievers</i>	<i>Dialogue-Journal Extract</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Learner's skills in English</li> </ul>	H3	<i>-The structure of present perfect makes me crazy because of its difficulty. I hope that I will understand it.</i>
	L5	<i>-Today there was a vocabulary test. I was very happy because I could do it.</i>
	L1	<i>-I think, I can't write a good narrative essay because I have problems about the tenses used in different events.</i>
	L2	<i>-I know more and more vocabulary but I don't understand or remember it. I don't like essay writing either.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Course instructor</li> </ul>	H5	<i>-Before this class, I thought my English teacher in University was an old and cruel teacher. But I knew that was incorrect... You looked very kind to me. You made me promise myself that I will study hard in this class because I like the English subject and my English teacher.</i>
	L1	<i>-My teacher is kind and friendly. I like and feel relaxed with this Experiential English class. From this class, I understood the narrative essay more than before.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Learning materials facilitating grammatical learning</li> </ul>	H1	<i>-Besides books and other common stuff, there are computer programs that help us learn English too. Amazing!</i>
	H2	<i>-The teacher explained the correct answers through the powerpoint slides which helped me understand and then learned about sentence problems.</i>

<b>Factors Affecting Readiness for Grammatical Learning</b>	<b>Achievers</b>	<b>Dialogue-Journal Extract</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Learner's English skills &amp; opinions of their skills</li> </ul>	L4	<i>-I have little knowledge of vocabulary in my brain that makes me unable to understand all of my homework.</i>
	L5	<i>- I've never liked English. Most of my friends understood English but I did not. I am not good at grammatical points and cannot use them. In the class, I just wanted to cry.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ External factors outside the classroom</li> </ul>	H2	<i>-I went to study by subway. It was so crowded and warm that I had a stomachache and felt dizzy. It was bad for me before arriving to the class late....</i>
	H3	<i>-Although I tried to pay attention to the class, I was very tired and so sleepy because I just came back from summer camp.</i>
	H5	<i>-I went to the class late again because of the traffic. I was very tired of forgetting bringing my textbook to the class. ... Yet, I felt more excited because it was nearly time to go to the summer camp.</i>
	L3	<i>-I didn't attend the class today because I went back home to another province outside Bangkok.</i>
	L2	<i>-I was very tired when I reached the class because I walked up to the class which was on the fifth floor of the building.</i>
	L4	<i>-I was very sleepy in class because I played football with my friends yesterday.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Time constraints</li> </ul>	L1	<i>- I felt worried about my homework because I had many activities this month. So, I hardly had free time for homework and class assignments.</i>
	L2	<i>-Time was so short. My time was missing. In two weeks, there would be mid-term exam, and I was worried about reading books...</i>

### 3.2.2 Interview responses

The content analyses of the interview responses for both groups of achievers, in Table 4, support the claim that JW could enhance their grammatical accuracy, self-confidence and self-satisfaction with the

use of verb tenses. Moreover, JW could build up, to some extent, the achievers' motivation to perform self-studying and self-monitoring, or even their awareness of teacher feedback and grammatical accuracy.

*The Use of Journals to Develop Grammatical Accuracy in Writing*

Table 4: Opinions on the use of JW on grammatical accuracy: Interview extracts

<i>Opinions about JW Use</i>	<i>Achievers</i>	<i>Interview Extract</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Boosting grammatical accuracy &amp; gaining writing practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H1,</li> <li>H3&amp;H4</li> <li>H2</li> <li>L3</li> <li>L4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-After writing journals, my grammatical accuracy was improved.</li> <li>-I think, journal writing helps improve grammatical accuracy a lot.</li> <li>-After writing journals, I found my grammatical accuracy improving because I had a chance to practice writing.</li> <li>-I think that journal writing helps the use of grammatical tenses.</li> <li>-I think, journal writing helps enhance grammatical accuracy in terms of the use of tenses because every time I wrote a journal, I had a chance to practice grammar and writing.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Creating positive attitudes towards English language grammar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H1</li> <li>H3</li> <li>L4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Initially, I moderately liked English grammar. When I started writing a journal, I found that the accuracy in grammar hadn't met my satisfaction yet. However, after writing journals, I like English grammar more.</li> <li>-I think I like English grammar more after writing journals which were entertaining.</li> <li>-After writing both types of journals, I like grammar more.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Gain error-correction practice &amp; awareness of teacher feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H4</li> <li>H2</li> <li>L2</li> <li>L4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Journal writing helped to improve my grammatical accuracy because I could find error correction in the writing.</li> <li>-I understood my grammatical errors especially with my lecturer's feedback. When I read the lecturer's feedback, I remember my mistakes and I find my grammatical accuracy improving.</li> <li>-Journal writing helped improve grammatical accuracy particularly if there was corrective feedback which could make us realize where our errors were and remind us of trying not to repeat the same errors. I think the lecturer's feedback on grammar was good and needed since it made us rethink and know where our grammatical errors were.</li> <li>-Before I did not know how to write but when I looked at the lecturer's feedback or comments, they helped. I felt more satisfied with my grammatical accuracy though it still needs to be more improved.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Building up confidence &amp; self-satisfaction with the use of verb tenses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H5</li> <li>H2</li> <li>L2</li> <li>L3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-I just like journal writing at the same degree as before writing them. However, I felt much more confident of my grammatical accuracy after writing journals. Besides, I felt satisfied with my grammatical accuracy after journal writing.</li> <li>-Although I haven't been generally satisfied with my grammatical accuracy yet because I still made errors in word spelling and others... a kind of my carelessness, I'm satisfied, to some extent, with the use of tenses.</li> <li>-... However, I felt little satisfied with my grammatical accuracy since I'm not sure yet of which tense should be used in making a sentence. And I still felt that the increasing post-test grammatical scores was a kind of fluke. I still think that grammar is the most difficult skill.</li> <li>-I don't feel confident yet since I scarcely practice writing journals. Actually, I don't like journal writing at all because when I think in Thai, I know what I will write. But in English, I know neither how to start to write nor how to use English grammatically. I don't read the lecturer's written feedback either.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Developing self-study &amp; self-monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Journal writing helped enhance my grammatical accuracy. After journal writing, my grammatical accuracy was improved because in the process of rewriting, I had checked the accuracy with grammar books</li> </ul>

	L1	<i>and rewrote before submitting the revision. -My teacher is kind and friendly. I like and feel relaxed with this Experiential English class. From this class, I understood the narrative essay more than before.</i>
	L5	<i>-Even so, I don't like grammar because I don't understand it yet even though I have been studying it. ... I mean, I don't understand anything about English... (laugh). ... However, after writing journals, I think my grammar such as the use of tenses, was getting better.</i>
■ Raising awareness of grammatical accuracy	L1	<i>-I think that the journal writing helps me be more careful about grammatical accuracy such as subject-verb agreement and tenses.</i>
	L2	<i>-I think that the journal writing helps enhance my grammatical accuracy. And at least, I started to be more careful about the use of tenses in writing.</i>

#### Phase 4: Reflecting process

From her investigation, the researcher learned that:

4.1 There may be a mismatch between the students' 'opinions' of the use of JW on grammatical accuracy (from dialogue journals and interview responses) and their 'actual grammatical accuracy' after exposure to journal writing. That is:

4.1.1 The students perceived JW as a means to improve, to some extent, their grammatical accuracy. Their utilization of JW, particularly in the process writing, through self-editing of their own grammar could help them reflect more and be much more aware of their grammatical accuracy and its improvement in writing. Accordingly, JW could promote grammatical accuracy in language learners if it is implemented in the way of 'process-oriented' writing which was proved in this study as a means to, at the very least, raise the students' consciousness of their language grammar learning.

4.1.2 Although the majority of the students in the study claimed JW as a means to

enhance their grammatical accuracy (Table 4) and there was likely more grammatical improvement in the group of low achievers (Table 2), the actual grammatical accuracy of both groups of achievers analyzed through their JW (Tables 1 and 2) did not show a statistically significant improvement after their exposure to JW.

In this study, the students practiced JW with the researcher's indirect feedback provided during the processes of the treatment. However, almost all of them still made similar grammatical tense errors in terms of verb tense form, meaning and use. The researcher reflected that the students' grammatical performance discovered through their JW seems to run counter to what was revealed in the students' interview responses: that teacher feedback helped improve their grammatical accuracy in journal writing (Table 4). However, the issue regarding the significant roles of teacher feedback raised by the students in the study should be considered in terms of its effects on students' grammatical accuracy for further studies.

4.2 In the study, the researcher's corrective feedback on the students' JW took a great deal of time; thus, to save

teachers' time for scoring students' written tasks:

4.2.1 Teacher's selective-correction is recommended to be applied for further action studies.

4.2.2 Students' peer-editing should also be implemented into the process writing for future AR cycles after the students had experience with self-editing. Peer-editing can promote not only cooperative learning among students but also their awareness of grammatical accuracy in writing.

4.3 JW should be integrated with more information technology (e.g., e-mails, MSN, and social networking sites—Facebook, HI5, MySpace, and Blogs) to be more entertaining and time-saving for learning and teaching communities. It cannot be denied that technology is daily-life relevance and can easily motivate young learners to learn with its entertaining aspects.

Two of the students' interview responses in this study reported that they preferred process writing to dialogue journaling due to its relevance to their interests:

*I think, both types of journal writing help to improve grammatical accuracy.*

*After writing journals, I feel so much more confident of English grammar.*

*By the way, I prefer process writing to dialogue journaling because I prefer to choose the writing topics myself, while the dialogue journals were repetitive and boring and I think choosing topics of interest is more helpful because I can think more and know what I will write. For example, a matter of our favorite superstar...err, why we like him can be*

*more productive thinking. In short, if we are required to write on what we like, I will be able to write more.*

Thus, JW in this study also contained an aspect of promoting autonomous learning (Staton 1987, Dam and Legenhausen 1999, Trites 2001, Vygotsky 1978 cited in Burton and Carroll 2001; Marefat 2002, Brown 2004, Vickers and Ene 2006) in that JW could stimulate the students to rely on themselves and their own experiences (Dam and Legenhausen 1999, Müller-Verweyen 1999).

## **Conclusion**

The results of the study indicated that the undergraduates' positive opinions of the use of JW as a means to improve grammatical accuracy did not match their actual grammatical accuracy in JW, where non-significant improvement was found. However, this study was helpful for undergraduates, who had no prior exposure to JW in English, in raising their awareness of grammatical accuracy. It also gave them more self-confidence in the use of verb tenses and more self-motivation to reflect on and monitor their own grammatical accuracy after the JW treatment. In all, the utilization of journal writing is suggested to be promoted in language classroom practices so as to provide language teachers with some actual insights into their learners' perspectives on the use of journals to boost grammatical accuracy in writing in an EFL context.

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**Appendix A**  
**Instructor's Indirect Feedback - Correction Symbols**

SYMBOL	MEANING	EXAMPLE
sp	<b>spelling mistake</b>	- She <u>speeks</u> French fluently.
ww	<b>wrong word</b>	- He gave the wrong <u>factory</u> .
wo	<b>wrong word order</b>	- They <u>never are</u> at home when I call.
cap.	<b>capitalization error</b>	- I go to <u>chulalongkorn</u> university and plan to become a <u>D</u> octor.
p.	<b>punctuation error</b>	- Judie lives in Bangkok; but works in Chiangmai. - This dessert is made with eggs_milk_and sugar.
sv	<b>subject-verb agreement mistake</b>	- Most people <u>eats</u> the same thing for breakfast everyday.
T	<b>wrong tense usage</b>	- Most people <u>have eating</u> the same thing for breakfast everyday.
wf	<b>wrong word form</b>	- He is a very nice and <u>kindness</u> manager.
^ \ ^	<b>word missing unnecessary word</b>	- He working at the McDonald's now.
RO	<b>run-on</b>	- They ate breakfast then they went out. {Correct: They ate breakfast. Then they went out. or They ate breakfast, and then they went out. }
FRAG	<b>Fragment (not a complete sentence)</b>	- <u>The dinner that we had last night.</u> {Correct: The dinner that we had last night was very good. }
sing. / pl.	<b>Singular/plural required or error</b>	- Peter likes fast music and fast <u>car</u> .
π	<b>paragraph</b>	
??	<i>I don't understand this!</i>	

Adapted from: - Chulalongkorn University Language Institute (2008).  
- Hogue (1996).

### Appendix B Student's Reflection

**Direction:** Please answer the following:  
Please rate your performance in the following skills.

Levels Skills	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Listening					
Reading					
Speaking					
Writing					
Grammar					
Vocabulary					
Pronunciation					

Which skill do you have most difficulty with? \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix C Criteria for Dialogue-Journal Writing

Tense	Three Dimensions of Grammar		
	Form	Meaning	Use
<b>1. Present</b>			
<b>(a) Present Simple</b>	Present tense verb (-s/-es) (Note: Subject-verb agreement rules must be followed.)	-Habits, events or situations habitually or usually exist.	-To express general truth, theories, or habitual action. E.g., <i>In Thailand, all students <b>study</b> Thai.</i>
<b>(b) Present Perfect</b>	has/have + past participle(V. 3)  (Note: Subject-verb agreement rules must be followed.)	-A period of time that began in the past and has not stopped. It is possible for the action to continue into the present. The past time is thought of as related to present time.	-To introduce or refer to indefinite past time that is related to the present time. E.g., <i>The ABC company <b>has existed</b> since 1990.</i> (It started in 1990 and continues until now.)
<b>2. Past</b>			
<b>(a) Past Simple</b>	(1) Regular verbs (-ed) (2) Irregular verbs (was/were, and other past-tense verbs made by a change in spelling)	-Actions or activities began and ended in the past.	-To describe actions or activities that began and ended in the past. E.g., <i>Maria <b>was</b> in the library until 6:00 p.m. yesterday.</i>

Tense	Three Dimensions of Grammar		
	Form	Meaning	Use
<b>(b) Past Progressive</b>	was/were + the present participle (V.ing)  (Note: Subject-verb agreement rules must be followed.)	-Action or activities happened at the same time in the past.	-To emphasize that something happened at the same time as something else. <i>E.g., While Cindy <b>was waiting</b> for Sam, she fell asleep.</i> Note: The past progressive is rarely used in simple sentences; it is usually used in contrast with another verb in a complex sentence.
<b>(c) Past Perfect</b>	had + past participle (V. 3)	-Actions or activities were completed before another action or activity in the past.	-To describe actions or activities that were completed before another action or activity in the past. <i>E.g., Before I became a general manager of this hotel, I <b>had been</b> an English lecturer for twenty years.</i>
<b>3. Future</b>			
<b>Future Simple</b>	will + verb infinitive (without to) (V. 1)	-Actions or activities are expected to happen in the future.	-To make predictions, plans or promises about the future; discuss opportunities; and share dreams, etc. <i>E.g., We hope that the new leader <b>will make</b> many changes.</i>
<b>Remark: -Present Progressive</b>	-is/am/are + the present participle (V.ing)	-Future actions or situations are in progress at the present time.	-To make the future time meaning clear. <i>E.g., Children <b>are buying</b> new computers tomorrow.</i>

Adapted from: Master (1996), Byrd and Benson (2001), Azar (2003)