# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

Among the four language skills--listening, speaking, reading and writing--writing has been neglected in the current junior high school English curriculum in Taiwan. The goal of the current junior high school English curriculum focuses on the integration of the four language skills; however, in reality, the emphasis is placed only on listening, speaking and reading. The Basic Competence Test, which is the main exam junior high school students take in order to be able to apply for admittance to a senior high school or a vocational school, influences the English instruction in Taiwan. Because the items of the exam are all multiple-choice questions, most teachers and students believe that there is no need for the students to practice writing. Even if there is some kind of writing instruction at some schools, writing is only limited to sentence-level writing, such as answering questions, translating from Chinese to English, and combining sentences. Most of the junior high school students in Taiwan are not required to write an English composition.

However, writing is as important as the other language skills. Many researchers have stated that it is very important for language learners to experiment with the written language as early as possible (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hudelson, 1989; Wigfield, 1991). They further pointed out that if teachers do not offer students the chance to practice writing, they may miss a crucial time in which to help students improve their writing. Their opinions are worth considering. As a junior high school English teacher, the author thinks that if junior high school students have more chances to practice writing before entering senior high school, their writing may be improved. Dialogue journal writing may be a solution to this problem as it offers students an opportunity to practice writing.

A dialogue journal is like an oral conversation in written form between a teacher and a student. In writing dialogue journals, students write down what they

think, and the teacher offers responses according to the content. Thus, the teacher and students "talk" through pen and paper. When writing dialogue journals, students have more freedom in content. They can choose their own topics, and they can write as much as they want (Peyton, 2000; Song, 1997; Staton, 1988). Moreover, the teachers' roles are not those of "evaluators who correct or comment on the quality of the learner's writing" (Peyton, 2000). They don't grade or correct students' journals. Instead, they become participants in the written conversation. Therefore, the teachers accept what students write and respond to them based on their language levels and interests (Peyton & Reed, 1990). Furthermore, the teachers sometimes even try to elicit more discussion about certain topics that interest students.

Dialogue journal writing is an effective way to improve students' writing skills (Baskin, 1994; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Peyton, Staton, Richardson & Wolfram, 1993; Song, 1997; Worthington, 1997; Yang, 1995), especially at the early stage. Staton (1988) claimed that teachers of younger children discovered that dialogue journals were especially helpful in the early stage of literacy instruction. Staton (1982) pointed out that dialogue journal writing is "an initial developmental step for beginning writers to provide extensive opportunity for successful communication in written language before asking them to try a more complex form" (p.133). Chang (1996) also claimed that dialogue journal writing "allows beginning writers to have extensive writing experience which is at their own level, and is yet a real communicative experience" (p. 61).

In addition, dialogue journal writing has been found to have positive effects on writing fluency. B. Wang (2004) investigated the effects of dialogue journals on EFL writing in high schools in Taiwan and found that dialogue journal writing helped improve the students' writing fluency in terms of increased length and decreased time for writing journals. As a junior high school teacher in Taiwan, the author believes it is necessary to offer students the chance to write earlier, and dialogue journal writing may serve as an "initial developmental step" for junior high school students in Taiwan.

## Statement of the Problems

Dialogue journal writing, according to previous studies, has positive effects on students' writing. However, most of the previous studies on dialogue journal writing tended to examine its effects on students' motivation and attitudes towards writing (Baskin, 1994; Benson, 1995; Chow, 2001; Ho, 1992; Wang, A. L., 2004; Yang, 1995; Yang, 2002). Not many studies explored the effects of dialogue journal writing on writing fluency systematically. Among these studies, most of them (Benson, 1995; Chow, 2001, Ho, 1992; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Jones, 1991; Spener, 1991; Staton, 1988; Wong, 1996; Yang, 1995; Yang, 2002) were solely based on the teachers' observation of students' writing performance or the students' self-reports of the effects of dialogue journal writing. Few studies analyzed the texts of dialogue journals in order to examine whether or not dialogue journal writing improved writing fluency. Many previous studies, criticized by some researchers, (Jones, 1991; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Spener, 1991; Wang, A. L., 2004), did not provide enough scientific proof. B. Wang (2004) studied the effects of dialogue journals on EFL high school students' writing in Taiwan, and she pointed out that the limitation of her study lies in a lack of experimental and control groups to compare the results more scientifically. Therefore, as indicated by these researchers, whether the students' improvement is due to the implementation of dialogue journals or not still needs further investigation.

## Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the effects of dialogue journal writing on EFL junior high school students' writing fluency. It provided the integration of writing instruction and writing research in order to offer both researchers and language teachers some guidance. Moreover, it attempted to provide empirical and useful data on the effects of dialogue journal writing. It is hoped that the findings of the study may be of help to junior high school English teachers in Taiwan.

## Research Questions

The teacher-researcher devised the following research questions:

1. Does dialogue journal writing have a significant effect on junior high school students' writing fluency?

2. How would junior high school students respond to the writing prompts?

3. What are junior high school students' attitudes towards dialogue journal writing and its effects on their writing fluency?

## Definition of Terms

The following are brief definitions of the terms used in this study:

Dialogue journal writing:   Dialogue journal writing is like an oral conversation in written form. In this study, dialogue journal writing specifically refers to the written conversation between the teacher and his/her students. Students write journals regularly and continuously. After reading students' journals, the teacher responds to their journals according to the content or even elicits some questions for further discussion. Moreover, the teacher does not correct students' errors or evaluate the contents of students' journals.

Writing fluency:   According to Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki & Kim (1998), "fluency means that more words and more structures are accessed in a limited time" (p.14). Fluency is not intended to measure how accurate the words or structures are, but to measure the number of words or structures a writer writes in a period of time. In this study, students' writing fluency was measured in terms of writing length, clause length, and T-unit length.

Writing length:   The average number of words in the entry is considered as the writing length.

Clause length:   The total number of words divided by the total number of clauses is the clause length.

T-unit length:   Hunt (1965) defines a T-unit as "one main clause plus the subordinate clauses attached to or embedded within it" (p.49). The T-unit length is the "total number of words divided by the total number of T-units" (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki & Kim, 1998, p.24).

## Significance of the Study

In conducting this study, the teacher-researcher had the following contributions in mind. First, the teacher-researcher expected the findings of this study to enhance the understanding of the effects of dialogue journal writing on EFL junior high school students' writing fluency. Some previous studies examined the effects of dialogue journal writing on college or high school students' writing fluency in Taiwan. However, very few investigated the effects of dialogue journal writing on junior high school students' writing fluency. This study attempted to investigate if dialogue journal writing could also help improve younger EFL students' writing fluency. Second, by offering the guidelines to implement dialogue journals, the teacher-researcher also hoped to provide practitioners and teachers with clearer ideas of the implementation of dialogue journal writing. Finally, since writing is neglected in the current junior high school English curriculum in Taiwan, the teacher-researcher hoped that the results of this study would shed light on the role of dialogue journal writing in the junior high school English curriculum in Taiwan.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to dialogue journal writing, including the characteristics of dialogue journals, the effects of dialogue journal writing, and the guidelines for implementing dialogue journal writing in the language classroom.

## Characteristics of Dialogue Journal Writing

Dialogue journal writing is like an oral conversation in written form (Peyton & Reed, 1990; Peyton & Staton, 1991). The teacher and students write down what they think and communicate their ideas on paper. Dialogue journal writing has the characteristics of interaction and communication. Writing, according to Ulanoff (1993), "is a social activity with the purpose of communication as its basis" (p.50). Dialogue journal writing offers more opportunities for teachers and students to communicate (Peyton & Reed, 1990; Spack & Sadow, 1983). Moreover, Peyton and Staton (1991) claimed that "dialogue journal conversations share valuable characteristics of oral conversation" (p.65) and "equally valuable aspects of written language" (p.65). Similar to oral conversation, when students write dialogue journals, they have clearer ideas about their audience (Kreeft, 1984; Shuy, 1987; Spack & Sadow, 1983, Worthington, 1997; Wu, 2001). Therefore, they can understand that the real meaning of writing is to communicate. However, dialogue journal conversation is unlike oral conversation; students have more time to reflect, and they are not as easily interrupted (Peyton & Staton, 1991). In writing dialogue journals, the roles of the teacher and the students are equal. Both of them have the freedom to choose topics, make comments, ask questions, or answer questions. Therefore, it is interactive (Chang, 1996; Jones, 1991; Kreeft, 1984; Shuy, 1987) and genuine (Peyton & Reed,

1994). The focus of dialogue journal writing is on communication, not on form.

In addition, dialogue journal writing is much more learner-centered. Students play more active roles in dialogue journal writing. They have a greater opportunity to participate (Baskin, 1994). The writing is generated by students themselves (Benson, 1995; Kreeft, 1984; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Staton, 1993). When writing dialogue journals, they have the freedom to choose what they want to write about. It is not necessary to write on a specific topic offered by the teacher. Therefore, dialogue journal writing is different from the traditional writing approaches. The teacher who practices dialogue journals does not have much control of students' writing. Instead, the teacher shares the control with the students. The teacher and students are equal partners in the dialogue journals (Chang, 1996; Jones, 1991). Since students generate the topic themselves in dialogue journal writing, it is more interesting to them (Chang, 1996; Jones, 1991; Shuy, 1987, Wong, 1996). When writing dialogue journals, "students can communicate at their own pace" (Baskin, 1994, p.8). Furthermore, "the teacher can individualize language and content learning" (Peyton & Reed, 1990). Based on the students' journals, the teacher can offer comprehensible feedback and even model for students in his/her response.

The atmosphere for writing dialogue journals is non-threatening (Chang, 1996; Jones, 1991; Spack & Sadow, 1983; Taylor, 1981). Whenever students write dialogue journals, they won't feel as nervous as when they do formal writing tasks. Because teachers don't grade or correct the students' journals, there is less pressure on the students. This also encourages students to write with lower affective filters. They are not afraid to make mistakes, and more willing to take risks (Chow, 2001). Furthermore, many previous studies (Baskin, 1994; Carroll, 1994; Chang, 1996; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Lucas, 1990; Palmer, Cozean Alexander & Olson-Dinges, 1999) pointed out that dialogue journal writing helps increase the students' confidence in writing.

In order to retain the characteristic of interaction, dialogue journal writing should be regular and continue for a period of time (Benson, 1995; Peyton & Reed,

1990). Students may write journals twice or three times a week. They should form the habit of writing the journals regularly. Otherwise, the writing will lose the quality of interaction, and become short compositions (Peyton & Reed, 1990). In addition, dialogue journal writing is functional. When writing dialogue journals, students will try to use different kinds of language functions based on the various topics (Chang, 1996; Jones, 1991; Kreeft, 1984; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Shuy, 1987). Through the interaction with the teacher, students fulfill their purposes. For example, they may ask for clarification, offer opinions or express their ideas, and so on.

Finally, dialogue journal writing offers the chance for the students to be reflective. When writing journals, students express their thoughts and emotions. Due to the characteristics of reflection, journal writing has been adapted widely not only to language learning, but also to many other aspects. Zamel (1982) claimed that "writing is essentially a process of discovery" (p.195). She also suggested that keeping journals may help students realize that "writing is indeed a way to explore one's feelings and thoughts" (p.205). By writing journals, students become reflective and understand themselves better.

Due to the aforementioned characteristics, dialogue journal writing is beneficial to students' language learning. Therefore, many studies have been conducted in this area to examine the effects of dialogue journal writing and students' attitudes towards it.

**Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing**

Many researchers have affirmed the effectiveness of dialogue journal writing in building a positive relationship between teachers and students, reducing writing apprehension, enhancing students' motivation, building their confidence, increasing reading opportunities and improving language skills.

Dialogue journal writing has a positive effect on the teacher-student relationship. It helps teachers understand their students better (Baskin, 1994; Peyton

& Reed, 1990; Reed, 1993). From the journal entries, the teacher gets to know not only the students' thoughts about specific issues but also students' problems and interests. Taylor (1981) claimed that dialogue journal writing can also "serve as a mirror into the writer's interest" (p.10). Understanding what students are concerned about helps teachers to design future courses and to motivate students. Moreover, teachers can obtain some information which may help them plan lessons because students' journals may offer some feedback about the course that they are currently taking (Baskin, 1994; Bromley, 1995; Chang, 1996; Jones, 1991; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Reed, 1993; Spack & Sadow, 1983). Baskin (1994) claimed that dialogue journals may sometimes be "a means to understand the teacher's instruction" (p.2). From what students write, the teacher can have a clearer picture of students' problems. Therefore, the teacher can take these into consideration when planning a lesson.

Researchers have affirmed the effectiveness of dialogue journal writing in reducing students' anxiety (Chen, 1996; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Jones, 1991; Song, 1997; Spack & Sadow, 1983), enhancing students' motivation (Baskin, 1994; Chen, 1996; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Jones, 1991; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Yang, 2002) and building their confidence (Baskin, 1994; Benson, 1995; Carroll, 1994; Chen, 1996; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Lucas, 1990; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Yang, 2002). Since teachers do not correct students' errors in journals, students will have less pressure. Jones (1991b) claimed that the interaction that takes place in dialogue journals between the teacher and students may increase students' motivation to write. In another study, Jones (1991a) examined a shy student's journals and her performance in class. He found that the student was more willing to communicate her ideas with the teacher in the dialogue journals. According to him, journal writing is non-threatening to shy students. In addition to motivating shy students, dialogue journal writing offers a window for reluctant students to express themselves (Reed, 1993). Yang (2002) analyzed students' questionnaires about their attitudes towards keeping journals and concluded that most of the students thought that writing dialogue journals made them more confident about writing. Lucas (1990) reported that all of

the participants in the study believed that they benefited from writing personal journals. Most of them even reported that they gained confidence. The confidence made them "believe in themselves as writers, in their abilities to communicate in written English and improve their writing skills" (p.113).

Dialogue journal writing helps increase students' reading opportunities (Jones, 1991; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Song, 1997; Spack & Sadow, 1983; Worthington, 1997). Writing and reading the journals provide more chances for students to read the target language and, meanwhile, students learn how to write. Spack & Sadow (1983) claimed that by reading the teachers' journals and by writing their own journals, students "become more aware of the way most people really write, of some ways in which they can learn to write, and of writing as a way to learn" (p.590).

In addition, dialogue journal writing is very effective in improving students' language skills (Chang, 1996; Chen, 1996; Chow, 2001; El-Koumy, 1998; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Jones, 1991; Palmer, Cozean Alexander, & Olson-Dinges, 1999; Song, 1997; Spack & Sadow, 1983; Spener, 1991; Ulanoff, 1993; Wong, 1996; Yang, 2002). Dialogue journal writing helps improve learners' speaking, reading and writing skills. El-Koumy (1998) investigated the effect of dialogue journals on EFL students' speaking skills. All of the participants were tested on English speech skills, such as trying to describe some pictures they were shown or describing a TV schedule. The results of the study showed that the experimental group, which received the dialogue journal training, scored significantly higher than the control group. Song (1997) examined the effect of dialogue journals on the reading comprehension of 207 students in a Korean university, and found that those who wrote journals scored higher on the TOEFL reading achievement test. Furthermore, dialogue journal writing promotes students' writing ability (Chang, 1996; Chow, 2001; Jones, 1991; Kerka, 2002; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Peyton & Seyoum, 1993; Wong, 1996; Wu, 2001). Due to the extensive practice in writing, students have more opportunities to use the language and practice what they learn in the journals. Moreover, as Spack & Sadow (1983) and Taylor (1981) stated, it is a good way to generate and brainstorm ideas.

When writing dialogue journals, students can write down whatever they think of or they are interested in. Therefore, they form the habit of brainstorming ideas before writing. In addition, dialogue journal writing helps improve students' writing fluency (B. Wang, 2004; Chang, 1996; Chow, 2001; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Jones, 1991; Ulanoff, 1993; Yang, 2002). These studies pointed out that students were able to write longer passages after they had done dialogue journal writing.

**Writing Fluency and Fluency Measurement**

Dialogue journal writing has a great impact on students' writing fluency. Broadly speaking, fluency is the ability to communicate effectively and easily. Shelly Gutstein claimed that students are considered fluent when they can satisfy the following four criteria: first, students can write quickly and easily; second, students can express their meanings in coherent, reasoned sentences; third, students can use different language functions to express their meanings well; finally, students can write creatively and imaginatively (cited in Jones, 1991b). Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim (1998) claimed that fluent writers are people who can write "rapidly, coherently, appropriately, and creatively" (p.13). To them, writing fluently means writing with ease and writing more in the same amount of time.

Even though writing fluency has been emphasized frequently in studies on writing, few studies have clearly explained and defined writing fluency in detail. There is still no universally accepted definition of writing fluency (Bruton & Kirby, 1987). However, most researchers have reached the consensus that fluency can be evaluated by the length of essay (Reid, 1990; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998). Writing fluency can be assessed in terms of "how rapidly or easily the discourse moves are executed" (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998, p.5). Thus, the intent of writing fluency is not to measure how accurate the words or structures are, but to measure the number of words or structures a writer writes within a period of time.

There are three major ways to measure writing fluency. Many researchers (B.

Wang, 2004; Peyton, Staton, Richardson & Wolfram, 1993; Sasaki, 2000; Ulanoff, 1993) counted the number of words in a text as a measure of writing fluency. Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim (1998) reviewed the fluency measures that have been used in many studies in written communication and suggested the best ways to measure writing fluency are T-unit length and clause length. Moreover, Scott (1995) claimed that both the T-unit length and the clause length are good indicators of a student's grade level. White and Grant (2001) claimed that T-unit length is a reliable and objective way for teachers to understand students' written language growth. Peyton & Seyoum (1993) further claimed that T-unit length has been used widely in both first and second language research and correlates with students' "linguistic and maturational development" (p.182). However, Ishikawa (1995) suggested that clause length is a much better way to examine beginners' levels than the T-unit because the T-unit is more appropriate for learners who have already achieved a certain level of language proficiency.

**Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on Writing Fluency**

Previous studies (B. Wang, 2004; Chang, 1996; Chow, 2001; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Isserlis, 1991; Jones, 1991; Spener, 1991; Ulanoff, 1993; Worthington, 1997; Yang, 2002) have pointed out that students become more fluent in writing after writing dialogue journals.

Chow (2001) investigated the implementation of dialogue journal writing at National Taiwan Normal University in Taiwan. Data were elicited via interviews with instructors and questionnaires answered by the students. The results showed that dialogue journal writing helped increase students' writing fluency in terms of the quantity of every entry. Moreover, according to the questionnaires, 51.9% of the students thought that journal writing was helpful and 45.57% of the students believed dialogue journal writing was very helpful, especially in improving writing fluency. Only 2.53% of the students thought that it helped very little.

The participants in Holmes & Moulton's study (1995) also claimed that dialogue journal writing improved their writing fluency. One of the students, Mikhail, wrote: "I think writing these letters have been great help to me. First, this has helped to build my vocabulary. Second, it has increased my proper knowledge of English" (Holmes & Moulton, 1995, p.231). Moreover, some students noticed that they were less dependent on dictionaries. Ceci, a 21-year-old Korean, stated, "At first I always have to find dictionary, but after one month, a little bit I don't need dictionary … I could arrange my thought from Korean language to American grammatical sentence" (Holmes & Moulton, 1995, p.232).

Chang (1996) examined the effects of dialogue journals on writing fluency through the teacher's observation and students' journal entries. She found that students wrote more after the journal writing project was implemented. Chang concluded that "journal writing is an ideal vehicle in the teaching and learning process and students' writing fluency seems to be enhanced" (p.58). Dialogue journals offer a lot of opportunities for students to write, and Chang believes that the more the students write, the more fluent they become.

Yang (2002) found that her EFL undergraduate students in the three-year English language program (evening division) at Chung Chou Institute's Department of Applied Foreign Languages benefited from writing dialogue journals. The students claimed that writing dialogue journals encouraged them to explore ideas and writing styles in a variety of ways. As they wrote journals more often, they wrote more fluently and easily. Similarly, the students in Jones' study (1991b) wrote more easily and quickly after writing dialogue journals. Jones found that his students only wrote two or three sentences per entry at the beginning of the semester. However, by mid-semester, they could write a half or full page.

Furthermore, Ulanoff (1993) had a similar finding. He examined the writing development of two students' dialogue journals over three school years. The focus was on the content features and surface features. The results showed that students had improved after writing journals for 3 years. The amount of words per entry was

increased. The mean length of one student's first journal entry was 31.9 words. However, the mean length of his last journal entry was 75 words. The other student's first journal entry was 14.5 words, and the mean length of his last journal entry was 20.8 words. In addition, both of them had positive attitudes towards journal writing. Both students claimed that they liked journal writing and were willing to keep doing it.

B. Wang (2004) examined the effects of dialogue journal writing on writing fluency in terms of word count and time spent on dialogue journal writing. She found that students wrote for significantly less time in the last two journal entries than in the first two journal entries. Although she found no significant difference in word count after 14 weeks of dialogue journal writing, the mean number of words in the last two journal entries (M- 211.07) was 23 higher than the mean number of words in the first two journal entries (M- 188.07). Therefore, students wrote longer journal entries after they wrote dialogue journals for a period of time. Writing dialogue journals helped improve students' writing fluency.

## Negative Attitudes towards Dialogue Journal Writing

Dialogue journal writing has positive effects on language learning, according to most of the previous studies; however, some researchers pointed out that some participants have negative attitudes towards dialogue journal writing (Chow, 2001; Holmes & Moulton, 1995).

The purpose of Holmes & Moulton's study (1995) was to investigate the effects of dialogue journal writing from the students' perspective. Although most of the participants in Holmes and Moulton's study (1995) had positive attitudes towards dialogue journal writing, one participant did not agree that the effect of dialogue journals was positive. Dang came from Taiwan and had lived in the United States for 5 years. His spoken and written English were more fluent than many of his classmates. However, Dang offered a different view of dialogue journals. He strongly disagreed

with the practice of teachers' not correcting students' errors in the dialogue journal because he firmly believed that error correction was the key to improving English writing ability. Dang's case raised dialogue journal practitioners' awareness that students' perspectives should be carefully considered.

In addition to the learners' perception, instructors may have negative attitudes towards dialogue journal writing. Chow (2001) examined the implementation of dialogue journal writing at National Taiwan Normal University in Taiwan. The study investigated the practice of dialogue journal writing in terms of general guidelines and teaching principles. Although most of the instructors and students had positive attitudes towards this project, two of the instructors had negative opinions towards dialogue journal writing. One of the instructors complained about the workload. She felt that reading, correcting and responding to each journal entry was tiring. The other instructor found herself too often suggesting topics for some students who could not think of appropriate topics. Therefore, she replaced journal writing with other writing practice, such as summary writing.

These two studies indicate some of the participants' negative attitudes towards dialogue journal writing. Examining the participants' negative attitudes can help future researchers and practitioners in implementing dialogue journal writing.

**Implementation of Dialogue Journal Writing in the Language Classroom**

Many previous studies have pointed out that dialogue journal writing is an effective tool. However, some researchers reminded us of problems that may occur. Chow (2001), Wong (1996) and Yang (2002) investigated the implementation of dialogue journals and found some problems. First, many students struggled with what to write in dialogue journals because topics or prompts were not provided. The students in Yang's (2002) study pointed out they had difficulties with word dictions and grammar problems. Moreover, after conducting a study of the journal writing project at National Taiwan Normal University, Chow (2001) concluded that neither

teachers nor students clearly understood the concept of dialogue journal writing. Understanding the previous problems may help future researchers or practitioners implement dialogue journal writing.

How to implement this tool is also important. The following are guidelines for implementing dialogue journal writing suggested by dialogue journal researchers and practitioners.

*Material*

The materials for writing dialogue journals can be a bound, portable notebook or a double-entry notebook. Peyton & Reed (1990) and Worthington (1997) suggested that each student should have a bound, portable notebook, used only for the purpose of writing dialogue journals. Moreover, since dialogue journals are something personal, students can design the journals if they wish. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) suggested the use of double-entry notebooks. In the double-entry notebook, the right-hand side of the notebook is for students to write journal entries, and the left-hand side is saved for other students or teachers to use to write responses after reading the entries. Therefore, the responders have enough space to write comments directly opposite the initial section of the original entry.

*Content*

The content of dialogue journals includes whatever students want to write about: the themes of the textbook, reflection on their problems or the topics brainstormed by teachers and students. The content of dialogue journals can cover anything students want to share or discuss (B. Wang, 2004; Chow, 2001; Ho, 1992; Peyton, 1990; Yang, 1995; Yang, 2002). However, some students may struggle with such freedom and might not know what to write about. Therefore, the teacher might ask students to focus on the course content (Benson, 1995; Chen, 1996). In order to avoid the aforementioned problems, Chen (1996) asked his students to focus on the themes of the course content when writing dialogue journals. Moreover, Song (1997) asked the

participants to write journals on six reading chapters. In addition to the themes of the course content, reflection can also be used as a topic in dialogue journals. In Spack & Sadow's study (1983), students were required to write working journals based on their ESL composition course. They reflected upon their problems or the parts they didn't understand in the dialogue journals, and the teacher answered students' questions in the journals. The feedback offered the teacher a great opportunity to adjust his/her teaching approaches. Moreover, in order to avoid the situation of students being unable to think of topics, many researchers suggested that the instructors offer a list of topics for students to refer to (Chow, 2001; Song, 2001) or brainstorm ideas with students (Bromley, 1995; Chow, 2001; Reed, 1993; Song, 2001).

*Minimum Length*

Some researchers and practitioners have suggested that teachers should set a minimum length for students' dialogue journal entries at the beginning (Bromley, 1995; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Reed, 1993; Worthington, 1997). Both Reed (1993) and Song (1997) asked the students to write entries of at least three sentences in length. In Chen's study (1996), the EFL junior high school students had to write at least five sentences for each journal entry. Students at National Taiwan Normal University had to write at least one page for every journal entry (Chow, 2001); students in Wong's (1996) study were required to write one to two pages for each entry.

*Frequency*

Students can write dialogue journals every day or several times a week. Peyton & Reed (1990) pointed out that writing dialogue journals daily is an ideal; however, it is not necessary to keep journals every day. They suggested that writing dialogue journals two or three times a week is necessary. However, many studies conducted in Taiwan, which only required students to write dialogue journals once a week (B. Wang, 2004; Chang, 1996; Chow, 2001; Yang, 2002; Worthington, 1997). Worthington (1997), claimed that the frequency of dialogue journal entries depends

on the instructors' class schedule and the students' writing ability. Most important of all, dialogue journal writing should become a routine for the participants in order to create interaction between students and teachers. The writing and responding should be regular, frequent and continuous (Reed, 1993).

### *When to Write and How Long*

Dialogue journals can be written at any time. Therefore, they can be included in the class period (Bromley, 1995; Chang, 1996; Chen, 1996; McGrail, 1991; Spener, 1991) or as a take-home assignment (B. Wang, 2004; Chow, 2001). According to Peyton & Reed (1990), most teachers give students time to write during class. In Chang's study (1996), the students had 20 minutes to do in-class journal writing. However, three months later, the students in her study asked for more time to write journals in class. Therefore, the writing time was extended to 30 minutes. In addition, McGrail (1991) asked her students to write journals at the end of every week, for about 10 to 15 minutes. Bromley (1995) also suggested that teachers allot 10 to 20 minutes for students to write journals. Chen (1996) asked his junior high school students to write journals in class for around 20 minutes. On the other hand, journal writing can serve as a take-home assignment. B. Wang (2004) asked her students to write dialogue journals at home and write down the amount of time they spent on writing every journal entry. Moreover, the students at National Taiwan Normal University in Taiwan had to keep personal journals at home (Chow, 2001).

### *Participants*

The participants in dialogue journal writing include students, teachers, peers and native speakers. In most of the studies on dialogue journal writing, teachers were the only readers of students' dialogue journals (B. Wang, 2004; Chang, 1996; Chow, 2001; Chen, 1996; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Yang, 2002). However, students can also exchange journals with their peers (Chen, 1996; Worthington, 1997; Yang, 1995) or native speakers (Bromley, 1995). Worthington (1997) suggested that writing dialogue

journals with students' classmates is very beneficial to both teachers and students. For teachers, the primary benefit of this is the reduction of workload. For students, this type removes the pressure of writing for a teacher.

### *Teachers' Responses to Journals*

When teachers respond to students' journal entries, general comments at the end of the journal entries are not sufficient (Todd, Mills, Palard, & Khamcharoen, 2001). Teachers should not give grades or simple comments such as "Good!" or "Interesting point!" to students (Peyton & Reed, 1990).

On the other hand, teachers should offer positive feedback and support to students. Teachers should respond based on the students' writing content, and even try to elicit more discussion about the topics students choose. Thus, teachers should participate in the discussion and respond directly and openly (Brinton, Holten, & Goodwin, 1993; Peyton & Reed, 1990). Moreover, when responding to students' journal entries, teachers should keep in mind students' language ability (Reed, 1993; Shuy, 1993; Staton, 1993) and sometimes even model the correct sentences in response (Chang, 1996; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Reed, 1993). According to Todd, Mills, Palard, & Khamcharoen (2001), "Comments which give suggestions, evaluate positively, add information, or support the participants are perceived as the most useful types of comment" (p. 358).

### The Present Study

The aim of the present study was to explore the effects of dialogue journal writing on writing fluency. The participants were 38 junior high school students in Taiwan. They were divided into a control group and an experimental group. Both groups took the pre-test before the dialogue journal writing was implemented in class. Then, students in the experimental group wrote dialogue journals at home for 10 weeks and handed in their dialogue journals twice a week. Unlike the previous studies,

this study offered students some writing prompts which were based on the themes of their English textbook. Finally, both groups took the post-tests after the dialogue journal writing was implemented. The pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed in terms of length of journal entries, clause length, and T-unit length. Moreover, students' questionnaires about their attitudes towards the dialogue journal project and its effects were analyzed. Thus, this study avoided the methodological flaws of previous studies and tried to examine the effects of dialogue journal writing more scientifically.

# CHAPTER 3


# METHOD


This chapter describes how the present study was conducted and how the data were analyzed. The chapter is divided into five sections: the participants, the instruments, the collection of the data, research variables, and data analysis.


## Participants and Population


The participants were 38 third-year junior high school students (23 males and 15 females) in the Natural Science Experiment class at Chung Ming Senior High School, a public school located in Taichung City. The Natural Science Experiment class was selected for this study because the levels of the students in this class were higher than those in other normal-distributed classes. The average score of the Natural Science Experiment class on the monthly English exams was higher than 90, whereas the scores of the other classes ranged from 50 to 70. Moreover, the students in the Natural Science Experiment Class had similar levels of English proficiency. The participants' average English score in the second school year was 94.3. Their scores ranged from 79 to 100. There was only one student in this class whose score was lower than 80. Thus, unlike the normal-distributed classes, the students in the Natural Science Experiment class were of similar levels. They had taken an English course with the teacher-researcher for two years by the time the study began. The students seldom wrote short English compositions in the English class. However, everyone in this class kept a writing portfolio when they were in their first year of junior high. As a result, they could write at least 75 words to introduce their best friend.

## Measurements, Variables, and Instruments

This study aimed to measure the participants' writing fluency after practicing dialogue journal writing. In the investigation, the independent variable--dialogue journal writing was used to predict the dependent variable--EFL junior high school students' writing fluency. The data were gathered from the following sources: the pre-test and the post-test written by all of the 38 students in this class, students' dialogue journal entries, and the questionnaire answered by the participants in this project.

All of the students took a pre-test before the dialogue journal writing project was implemented, and a post-test after the odd-number students wrote dialogue journals for ten weeks. In the pre-test and post-test, students had twenty minutes to write a composition in response to the writing prompt which was offered by the teacher-researcher (see Appendix A) on the test paper before the implementation of the dialogue journal writing project. The writing prompt of the pre-test and post-test was the same. The theme of the writing prompt was pets. Students wrote about their pets or shared with the teacher what animals they liked.

As for the dialogue journal entries, twenty writing prompts were offered by the teacher-researcher to the students in the experimental group (see Appendix B). The writing prompts were based on the themes in the students' English textbook Book Five, which was published by Kang Shiuan Publisher in Taiwan in 2004. The students chose either to write on the writing prompts offered by the teacher-researcher or wrote whatever they wanted to share. The dialogue journal entries were collected and examined to determine how students responded to the writing prompts.

Moreover, a questionnaire (see Appendix C) was used in this study to examine the participants' attitudes towards dialogue journal writing and what they had learned from the dialogue journal writing project in terms of writing fluency. The questionnaire mainly consisted of two parts. The first part required the participants to fill in their background information. The second part was about the participants'

opinions and attitudes towards dialogue journal writing, the effects of dialogue journal writing on writing fluency, the teacher's responses, and writing prompts.

The treatment for the study was the dialogue journal writing, in which students wrote twice a week on the writing prompts offered by the teacher or any topics of their choice, and the teacher responded to the participants' writing. The dependent variable was EFL junior high school students' writing fluency as measured by the following fluency measures: (1) the length of the entries, (2) clause length, and (3) T-unit length.

## Data Collection Procedures

The research project began on August 15, 2004, and lasted for twelve weeks (see Table 3.1.). In this study, the students in the Natural Science Experiment class were divided into two groups according to the students' seat numbers. Because some students who did not write dialogue journals also wanted to have the opportunity to practice writing dialogue journals, the teacher-researcher used students' seat numbers to divide students. Then, the control-group students could also practice writing dialogue journals after the present study was completed.

The students who were to be in the experimental group and the control group were chosen randomly. The odd-number students were in the experimental group, and the even-number students were in the control group. The experimental group and the control group were of similar levels of English proficiency. T-test was used to examine whether there was a lot of difference between the levels of the two groups. The result did not show any significant difference between these two groups of students. The average English scores of the two groups were very similar. The average score of the odd-number group was 94.55, and the average score for the even-number group was 94.03. Thus, the starting point of the two groups was similar.

Before the dialogue journal project was implemented, all 38 students took a pre-test. Students had twenty minutes to write a composition in response to the

writing prompt that was offered by the teacher-researcher. Then, the students in the experimental group had to prepare a notebook for the use of journals only. They could decorate the covers or the content of the journals as they liked. The participants had to write the dialogue journals twice a week for ten weeks. At the beginning of the project, the teacher-researcher explained what a dialogue journal is to the students and offered them written guidelines (see Appendix E) for dialogue journal writing. The teacher-researcher also offered students some writing prompts, which were based on the themes in the students' English textbook Book Five (see Appendix B) which was published by Kang Shiuan Publisher in Taiwan in 2004. In order to offer students sufficient time to write journals, dialogue journals served as a take-home assignment in this study. The students had to hand in their dialogue journals every Tuesday and Friday. The participants were encouraged to write their journals based on the writing prompts. However, they could still write anything they wanted to share or discuss in the journal entries. They were required to write at least five sentences for each journal entry. After reading the students' journals, the teacher-researcher responded to students' journals based on the content. The teacher-researcher tried to elicit questions about the content of students' journals and had further discussion or even shared her point of view about the topics. After reading the teacher-researcher's questions, the students chose to answer her questions or started a new topic in the next journal entry. The teacher-researcher did not correct the errors in the journal entries. When responding to students' journals, the teacher-researcher kept in mind the students' English ability and tried to offer positive and comprehensible responses (see Appendix F). At the end of the project, there were 380 dialogue journal entries in total. All the dialogue journal entries were collected. These dialogue journals served as the data for the teacher-researcher's investigation of junior high school students' attitudes towards the writing prompts. Finally, all thirty-eight students had to take the post-test together. The post-test was the same as the pre-test. Then, the participants' attitudes towards dialogue journal writing and its effects on writing fluency were surveyed at the end of the project. The participants in the experimental group answered a

questionnaire which was related to their attitudes towards dialogue journal writing and its effects.

Table 3.1.

*Schedule of the Research Project*

| Week | Date | Theme in students' textbook | Procedure |
|---|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | 8/15-8/21 | Preparation + Pets (Pre-test) Reading My Favorite Book & Writer | Pre-test + Introduction $1^{st}$, $2^{nd}$ D.J. |
| Week 2 | 8/22-8/28 | A Book Fair Comic Books | $3^{rd}$, $4^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 3 | 8/29-9/4 | Advertisement An Embarrassing Experience | $5^{th}$, $6^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 4 | 9/5-9/11 | Recreational Activities Sports | $7^{th}$, $8^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 5 | 9/12-9/18 | Computers Using Time Well | $9^{th}$, $10^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 6 | 9/19-9/25 | Vacation Traveling | $11^{th}$, $12^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 7 | 9/26-10/2 | Missing Persons Facing Problems | $13^{th}$, $14^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 8 | 10/3-10/9 | Graduation Trip | $15^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 9 | 10/10-10/16 | Traveling Around the World Different Ways of Traveling | $16^{th}$, $17^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 10 | 10/17-10/23 | Learning English Culture Differences | $18^{th}$, $19^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 11 | 10/24-10/30 | American English & British English | $20^{th}$ D.J. |
| Week 12 | 10/31-11/6 | Pets | Post-test + questionnaire |

**Data Analysis Procedures**

To investigate the effects of dialogue journal writing on the participants' writing fluency, four kinds of data were analyzed: the pre-tests, post-tests, the dialogue journal entries, and the questionnaire.

The pre-tests were analyzed quantitatively in order to determine whether the baseline knowledge of the control group and the experiment group was similar. To measure the students' writing fluency, the length of the entries, clause length, and T-unit length were analyzed before the treatment.

The post-tests were also analyzed quantitatively by the same three fluency measures. First, the length of each entry was examined. The total number of words in each entry was counted to see if there was an increase in the amount of words. Second, the clause length was investigated. The clause length was adopted as the analytical tool of this study because it is a better way to examine beginning-level learners' writing fluency than counting T-units (Ishikawa, 1995; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki & Kim, 1998). Since the third-year students of junior high school had not learned complex sentences yet, calculating clause length was better than counting T-units. The number of clauses in the post-tests was counted. Clause length is the total number of words divided by the total number of clauses. Third, T-unit length was examined, too. The number of T-units was counted, and the T-unit length is the total number of words divided by the total number of T-units. Hunt (1965) defines the T-unit as "one main clause plus the subordinate clauses attached to or embedded within it" (p.49). According to Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki and Kim (1998), T-unit length is one of the fluency measures that is often used in second language development. Even though junior high school students may not write complex sentences, T-unit length was still examined to see if there was any new discovery. Polio's guidelines (see Appendix G) were adopted to count words, clauses and T-units in order to achieve higher intra-rater reliability.

The software package SPSS 10.0 for Windows was adopted for the quantitative analysis in this study. The data were statistically analyzed using the t-test to examine whether there was significant difference between the two groups in the post-tests. The significance decision level was set at $\alpha < .05$ for all statistical significance testing.

In addition, students' journal entries were examined in order to investigate how junior high school students responded to the writing prompts. The content of every

dialogue journal entry was categorized into three sections. The first section was that students wrote solely based on the writing prompts. The second section was that students only wrote on their own topics. The third section was that students wrote on both the writing prompts and their own topics. Descriptive analysis was performed on the three sections to obtain frequency distribution.

Finally, the data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Descriptive analysis was conducted on all 20 items in terms of frequency. However, a qualitative analysis was performed to illustrate the students' answers to the four open-ended questions.

# CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter covers the following sections: 1) the effects of dialogue journal writing on junior high school students' writing fluency; 2) junior high school students' responses to the writing prompts, and 3) junior high school students' attitudes towards dialogue journal writing and its effects on their writing fluency.

## The Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on Students' Writing Fluency

In this section, the teacher-researcher's intent was to answer Research Question 1: Does dialogue journal writing have a significant effect on junior high school students' writing fluency? The data were analyzed qualitatively in order to investigate the effects of dialogue journal writing on EFL junior high school students' writing fluency.

### *Students' Writing Fluency on the Pre-test*

The pre-tests were analyzed in terms of the length of each journal entry, clause length, and T-unit length. The software package SPSS 10.0 for Windows was adopted for the quantitative analysis in this study. The data were statistically analyzed using the t-test to examine whether there was a significant difference between the two groups in the post-tests. The significance decision level was set at $\alpha < .05$ for all statistical significance testing.

Table 4.1 shows the pre-test means and standard deviations of the fluency measurement for the experimental and control groups. For the length of the journal entry, the experimental group (M = 129.16) wrote slightly longer entries than the control group (M = 106.68). However, with the significance decision level set at $\alpha < .05$, the result showed that there was no significant difference between the

experimental group and the control group in the length of the journal entry (p > .05). In addition, for the clause length of the journal entry, the experimental group (M = 5.98) wrote shorter clauses than the control group (M = 6.06). There was also no significant difference between the two groups (p > .05). Furthermore, for the T-unit length of the journal entry, the experimental group (M = 7.77) wrote shorter T-units than the control group (M = 8.36). No significant difference was found in this part, either (p > .05). The results of the pre-tests show the two groups had similar writing fluency. Thus, the baselines of these two groups were similar before dialogue journal writing was implemented in class.

Table 4.1.

*Comparison of Pre-test Mean Scores on the Three Factors of the Fluency Measurement: Experimental and Control Groups*

| Fluency Measurement | Experimental Group N=19 | | Control Group N=19 | | t-value | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Length of journal | 129.16 | 44.34 | 106.68 | 41.80 | 1.93 | .07 |
| Clause length | 5.98 | .48 | 6.06 | 1.02 | -2.95 | .77 |
| T-unit length | 7.77 | 1.04 | 8.36 | 1.61 | -1.32 | .205 |

Note: Significance decision level α < .05

***Students' Writing Fluency on the Post-test***

The results of the post-tests were used to investigate whether dialogue journal writing has a significant effect on junior high school students' writing fluency in terms of length of the journal entries, clause length, and T-unit length. T-test statistics for the differences in mean word count, mean clause length, and mean T-unit length were computed to answer Research Question 1: Does dialogue journal writing have a significant effect on junior high school students' writing fluency?

Table 4.2 presents the means and standard deviations of the fluency measurement for the experimental and control groups. The experimental group (M =

192.05) wrote significantly longer journal entries (p < .05) than the control group (M = 111.47). However, there was no significant difference between the experimental group (M = 6.32) and the control group (M = 6.08) in the clause length of the post-tests (p > .05). Furthermore, there was no significant difference between the experimental group (M = 8.76) and the control group (M = 8.42) in the T-unit length (p > .05), though the experimental group wrote slightly longer T-units than the control group. The results of the post-tests show the experimental group wrote longer journal entries than the control group after the dialogue journal writing project was implemented. However, the experimental group did not have significant improvements in the clause length and T-unit length.

Table 4.2.

*Comparison of Post-test Mean Scores on the Three Factors of the Fluency Measurement: Experimental and Control Groups*

| Fluency Measurement | Experimental Group N=19 | | Control Group N=19 | | t-value | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Length of journal | 192.05 | 65.92 | 111.47 | 48.07 | 4.15 | .001* |
| Clause length | 6.32 | .69 | 6.08 | .75 | 1.09 | .29 |
| T-unit length | 8.76 | 1.78 | 8.42 | 1.88 | .54 | .595 |

Note: Significance decision level α < .05

***Positive Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on Students' Writing Fluency***

The results of the post-tests revealed the positive effects of dialogue journal writing on EFL junior high school students' writing fluency. According to the data presented above, the students did improve their writing fluency in terms of length of the journal entry. Though they did not have any significant improvement in clause length and T-unit length, it is noteworthy that the students in the experimental group wrote slightly longer clauses and T-units than those in the control group.

Dialogue journal writing helps increase the length of the journal entries. Table

4.2 reveals that the students in the experimental group wrote significantly longer journal entries than the students in the control group. The mean word number of the experimental group was 192.05; whereas, the mean word number of the control group was 111.47 words. This is consistent with the results of many previous studies which pointed out that students enhanced their writing fluency in terms of length after practicing dialogue journal writing (e.g., B. Wang, 2004; Chang, 1996; Chow, 2001; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Jones, 1991; Ulanoff, 1993; Yang, 2002). In the present study, all the students had the same limited period of time to write a journal entry in the pre-tests and post-tests. There was no significant difference in the length of journal entries of either group in the pre-tests. However, in the post-tests, the students in the experimental group wrote more words than the students in the control group. This is probably because each of the students in the experimental group produced 20 journals based on the topics while the students in the control group did not write any. Since the students in the experimental group had more chances to practice dialogue journal writing, they could generate ideas more easily and quickly.

Two of the writing fluency analyses— clause length and T-unit length—showed that writing complex sentences might have been challenging for the third-year junior high school students. As shown in Table 4.2, the mean clause length of the experimental group was 6.32, which was .24 higher than that of the control group. This result does not meet the .05 significance level ($\alpha < .05$). However, the students in the experimental group wrote slightly longer clauses after writing dialogue journals for 10 weeks. The result is similar to the finding of Ishikawa's study (1995). Ishikawa (1995) found no significant difference in first-year college students' clause length after three months of EFL instruction, but the students did increase the clause length. It is likely that the fluency measurement of clause length might not be appropriate to measure EFL beginners' writing fluency. Also, for the T-unit length analysis, no significant differences were found between the experimental group and control group. However, the mean T-unit length of the experimental group was 8.76, which was .34 longer than that of the control group. Probably, as Ishikawa (1995) claimed, the T-unit

is more appropriate for learners who have already achieved a certain level of language proficiency. The EFL junior high school students did not have enough syntactic maturity to write complex sentences. When this study was conducted, the participants had not yet learned many complex sentence structures (such as adjective clauses). They mostly wrote simple sentences. Besides, a majority of the students could only use coordinating conjunctions (e.g., because, so) or adverb clauses to indicate the time (e.g., when, before, after). Therefore, using clause-length and T-unit length to measure EFL junior high school students' writing fluency may not be appropriate. Furthermore, time may well be another reason why there was no significant difference in the students' clause length and T-unit length. The students in the present study only wrote dialogue journals for ten weeks. As can be seen in Table 4.1, the students in the experimental group had shorter clause length and T-unit length than those in the control group in the pre-tests. However, after practicing dialogue journal writing for ten weeks, the students in the experimental group had longer clause length and T-unit length than those in the control group (see Table 4.2). Therefore, if the students in the experimental group could have continued writing dialogue journals for a longer period of time, they might have written significantly longer clauses and T-units so as to reach the significance level.

## Students' Preferences among the Writing Prompts

In this section, the teacher-researcher's intent was to answer Research Question 2: How will junior high school students respond to the writing prompts? The statistical results of the 20 writing prompts, the questionnaire, Item 20, and the open-ended question, Item 21, were used to investigate the participants' preferences among the writing prompts offered by the teacher-researcher or chosen by individual students.

The participants' preferences for the topics are shown in Table 4.3. As seen in Table 4.3, most of the students chose to write on the writing prompts offered by the teacher-researcher (55.5%). Some of the students chose personal topics (25.6%) and a few students wrote on both the suggested writing prompts and personal topics in the dialogue journal entries (18.8%). The result of this part of the study revealed that students preferred suggested writing topics to personal topics.

Table 4.3.

*Percentages of Students' Responses to the Topics*

| Participants N=19 | Suggested writing prompts | Personal topics | Both |
|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 55.5 | 25.6 | 18.8 |

Table 4.4 reveals the percentages of students' choices of the topics for the 20 journal entries. For the first six journal entries, the numbers of students who chose the suggested writing prompts and the personal topics were similar. However, it is interesting to note that after the seventh journal entry, most of the participants chose to write on the writing prompts. There were only two exceptions, the 13th journal entry and the 19th journal entry. For these two journal entries, more students chose to write on the personal topics than on the writing prompts on "Missing Persons" and "Cultural Differences". However, besides these two journal entries, a majority of the students chose to write on the writing prompts offered by the teacher-researcher. From the students' choices, it is obvious that students preferred the dialogue journal writing prompts suggested by the teacher-researcher.

Table 4.4.

*Students' Choices of the Topics for the 20 Journal Entries*

| No. of Journal Entry | Suggested Topics of the Journal Entry | Writing Prompt (%) | Personal Topic (%) | Both (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Reading | 37 | 47 | 16 |
| 2 | My Favorite Book & Writer | 47 | 32 | 21 |
| 3 | A Book Fair | 37 | 42 | 21 |
| 4 | Comic Books | 26 | 42 | 32 |
| 5 | Advertisement | 42 | 42 | 16 |
| 6 | An Embarrassing Experience | 42 | 42 | 16 |
| 7 | Recreational Activities | 79 | 5 | 16 |
| 8 | Sports | 74 | 5 | 21 |
| 9 | Computers | 68 | 16 | 16 |
| 10 | Using Time Well | 74 | 16 | 11 |
| 11 | Vacation | 74 | 11 | 16 |
| 12 | Traveling | 58 | 16 | 26 |
| 13 | Missing Persons | 32 | 42 | 26 |
| 14 | Facing Problems | 47 | 21 | 32 |
| 15 | Graduation Trip | 78 | 5 | 16 |
| 16 | Traveling Around the World | 74 | 11 | 16 |
| 17 | Different Ways of Traveling | 68 | 21 | 11 |
| 18 | Learning English | 63 | 16 | 16 |
| 19 | Cultural Differences | 42 | 53 | 5 |
| 20 | American English & British English | 47 | 26 | 26 |

The frequencies of the participants' responses to the helpfulness of assigned writing prompts (Item 20 of the questionnaire) are shown in Table 4.5. The participants all had positive attitudes towards the writing prompts offered by the teacher-researcher. As shown in Table 4.5, none of the students thought the suggested writing prompts were not helpful. Thus, the results of question 20 show the participants' positive attitudes towards the writing prompts offered by the teacher-researcher.

Table 4.5.

*Frequencies Distribution of Responses to the Helpfulness of Assigned Writing Prompts*

| Participants N=19 | very helpful | helpful | a little helpful | not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 7 | 7 | 5 | 0 |
| Percent | 37 | 37 | 26 | 0 |

Table 4.6 reveals the results of the students' preferences for the writing prompts based on the open-ended question, Item 21. Seven out of the nineteen participants preferred the writing prompts suggested by the teacher-researcher. Only three participants preferred personal topics. Nine of the nineteen participants held neutral attitudes.

Table 4.6.

*Frequencies Distribution of Responses to the Suggested and Personal Topics*

| Participants N=19 | Suggested writing prompts | Personal topics | It depends. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 7 | 3 | 9 |
| Percent | 37 | 16 | 47 |

### Benefits of the Suggested Writing Prompts

Assigned writing prompts, especially those based on the themes of the junior high school English textbook, seemed to be more beneficial to the students because they tended to offer the students a direction to refer to when they wrote journals. Six out of the nineteen students commented that they themselves did not know what to write about if there were no writing prompts. There were many things that they could write about. However, too many choices made them struggle with what to write. Moreover, from the students' self-reports, fewer students mentioned that they were confused about what to write. They struggled less with the topics. This was quite different from the findings of previous studies (e.g., Chow, 2001; Wong, 1996; Yang, 2002). In many previous studies, the participants claimed that they had difficulty in

deciding what to write. The findings of the present study may explain the reason why many students in the previous studies struggled with what to write about in the dialogue journals. Because of the writing prompts, the students in the present study struggled less with the topics. Thus, the provision of the writing prompts helped solve the problem mentioned earlier. Besides, since the themes of the writing prompts were related to their English textbook, it also offered the vocabulary and sentence structures that the students might need. Most of all, students had the chance to apply what they learned in the English textbook. This helped to reinforce their new knowledge. Two of the students explained that because the writing prompts were related to the content of their English textbook, they not only had more ideas from the writing prompts but also could apply more words, phrases and sentence structures that they had learned from their English textbook.

However, some students preferred personal topics to the suggested writing prompts when the topics were not related to their daily lives. The students who held neutral attitudes explained that it depended on whether they had some idea of what to write about after seeing the writing prompts. One said, "Whenever I got my notebook back, I read the writing prompts and thought about the topics for a period of time. If I had some ideas, I would write on them. However, if I didn't have any ideas about the writing prompts, I would choose my own topic because it was easier for me." Moreover, some students claimed that if something special happened that day, they wanted to share their experience with the teacher. For example, in the previous journal entries, it was just about the time for the Olympic baseball games. Many students were crazy about the baseball games and chose to write about this special event instead of the writing prompts in their journal entries. In addition, as can be seen in Table 4.4, after the seventh dialogue journal entry, the students mostly tended to write on the writing prompts except for the 13th and 19th journal entries. This might be because of the topics. The topic of the 13th entry was "Missing Persons," and the topic of the 19th entry was "Cultural Differences." These two topics are not closely related to junior high school students' daily lives. Three students in their 13th and 19th journal

entries claimed that they chose to write about personal topics because the topics of the writing prompts were so difficult that they could not write on them. Thus, if the assigned topics were not relevant to the students' lives and they couldn't identify with them, they would choose their own topics.

**Students' Attitudes towards Dialogue Journal Writing**
**And Its Effects on Their Writing Fluency**

This section aims to investigate students' attitudes towards the dialogue journal writing project. The teacher-researcher's intent was to answer Research Question 3: What are junior high school students' attitudes towards dialogue journal writing and its effects on their writing fluency? Together with the results of the questionnaire, the answers to the open-ended questions are also discussed in this section.

*Students' Attitudes towards Dialogue Journal Writing*

*Students' background information and writing habits*

Items 1 to 7 of the questionnaire were used to investigate the participants' background information and dialogue journal writing habits. The results of these items in the questionnaire (see Table 4.7) reveal that most of the participants spent less than 1 hour on every dialogue journal entry (Item 1, 94%). More than half of the participants thought that dialogue journal writing was neither difficult nor easy (Item 2, 68%); only a small percentage of students thought this project was difficult (Item 2, 16%). As for the workload of this project, about half of the participants thought the workload was not too heavy (Item 3, 47%). However, 26% of the participants thought that handing in journal entries twice a week was a little too much for them to do. 53% of the participants handed in their journals late once, but all of them made it up later. All of the participants handed in their journals (Item 5). Most of the participants thought they tried their best to finish this dialogue journal writing project (Item 7,

74%). Only 5% of the students thought that they did not work hard enough.

Table 4.7.

*Results of the Questionnaire (Students' Background Information and Writing Habits)*

1. How much time did you spend on each dialogue journal entry?

|  | Less than 20 minutes | Less than 1 hour | 1 to 2 hours | More than 2 hours |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 26 | 68 | 5 | 0 |

2. Did you think this dialogue journal writing was difficult?

|  | Very difficult | Difficult | So-so | Easy | Very easy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 0 | 16 | 68 | 11 | 5 |

3. In this project, you had to hand in your journal twice a week. What did you think about the workload?

|  | It was too heavy | A little too heavy | Neutral | Not so heavy | No workload |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 0 | 26 | 21 | 47 | 5 |

4. Have you ever not handed in the assignment or handed it in late?

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Percent | 53 | 47 |

5. Did you hand in your journal later?

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Percent | 100 | 0 |

7. Did you try your best to finish this dialogue journal writing project?

|  | Very hard | Hard | Neutral | Not hard enough | Not hard |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 11 | 63 | 21 | 5 | 0 |

Note: N=19

*Students' overall attitudes towards dialogue journal writing*

Items 8 to 10, Item 18, Item 19 of the questionnaire and the open-ended question, Item 23, were used to examine the students' overall attitudes towards the dialogue journal writing project. The results of the items (see Table 4.8) reveal that most of the participants thought this dialogue journal writing project was interesting or very interesting (Item 8, 74%). None of the participants thought this project was uninteresting or very boring. The majority of the students agreed that the dialogue journal writing project was very helpful or helpful in learning English (Item 9, 89%) and it was also helpful in increasing their motivation to learn English composition (Item 10, 73%). 74% of the students thought that they had enough responses from the teacher-researcher. In addition, most of the participants mentioned that the responses of the teacher-researcher were helpful to them (Item 19, 85%).

Table 4.8
*Results of the Questionnaire (Students' Overall Attitudes towards Dialogue Journal Writing)*

8. Was the dialogue journal writing assignment interesting?

|  | Very interesting | Interesting | Neutral | Not interesting | Very boring |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 21 | 53 | 26 | 0 | 0 |

9. Was this dialogue journal writing project helpful in learning English?

|  | Very helpful | Helpful | Neutral | Not helpful | Not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 42 | 47 | 11 | 0 | 0 |

10. Was this dialogue journal writing project helpful in increasing your motivation to learn how to write an English composition?

|  | Very helpful | Helpful | Neutral | Not helpful | Not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 26 | 47 | 16 | 11 | 0 |

18. Did you have enough feedback or suggestions in your journal entries?

|  | Yes, I had a lot | Enough | Neutral | Not enough | No, I didn't |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 21 | 53 | 16 | 11 | 0 |

19. Your teacher responded to your journal entries. Do you think the responses were helpful?

|  | Yes, very helpful | Yes, helpful | A little helpful | No, not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 53 | 32 | 16 | 0 |

Note: N=19

Additionally, the participants' written responses to Item 23 show that most students had positive attitudes towards the effects of dialogue journal writing. Students with positive attitudes explained the reasons why dialogue journal writing was helpful to them. They claimed that dialogue journal writing helped them improve their English writing ability, increase their vocabulary, enhance their confidence in writing, enhance the teacher-student communication, and arouse their interest in writing.

Most of the students thought that dialogue journal writing was effective. Eleven students indicated that this dialogue journal writing project helped them improve their English writing ability. Two of the eleven students mentioned that this project was helpful because they didn't have to spend a lot of time on it, but they could see the progress in their writing ability. Besides, three students mentioned that although writing dialogue journals was sometimes tiring, it did help them improve. One student stated, "No pains, no gains. I think it is worthwhile to spend some time on this project." Moreover, some students stated that dialogue journal writing helped them increase their vocabulary. Six students thought that they learned many words during the project. Many students used a dictionary to look up the words they did not know. Thus they learned many new words. One student said, "Whenever I don't know how to say something in English, I will look up the word in the dictionary. After I learn these new words, I will use them very often. Besides, the teacher's responses help me to learn some new words and their usages, too." Another student remarked, "Sometimes I want to use a word in my journals, but I don't know how to spell it. I will try different ways to find out the correct spelling of the word. This helps me

understand the word and makes me become impressive of the new word." Still another student claimed that he/she learned some unfamiliar words and grammatical forms after writing dialogue journals. He/She found that he/she could write more easily and made fewer mistakes.

Many students pointed out that writing dialogue journals helped them to be more confident in writing. One commented, "At the beginning, I didn't know how to start to write an English journal. But after practicing more, writing an English journal becomes easier. I am not so frightened to write English journals as before. Writing English journals is not that difficult. I can also do it well." Another claimed, "I am afraid to make grammatical mistakes at the beginning, but later, I just wrote down what I think. I think the most important thing is to express my ideas clearly. Without the fear of making grammatical mistakes, I am more confident when writing." Some students indicated the benefits of the writing prompts. In particular, one student mentioned, "This project is good because I can practice what I have just learned in the English class. This increases my confidence."

Some students specifically mentioned their attitudes towards the teacher's responses and thought dialogue journal writing was a good way to improve teacher-student communication. They liked to read the teacher's responses to their dialogue journals whenever they got their journals back. One student claimed, "I like to read the teacher's responses. After I read the teacher's responses, I am satisfied and content." In addition, some students reported that writing dialogue journals with the teacher-researcher was fun and interesting. For example, one said, "I think this project is quite interesting because I can write down all my happiness, anger, and sadness, etc., in my life. I can share my thoughts and feelings with my teacher. Besides, the writing prompts are about our daily lives, so I can also write down my personal experiences." Most of the students were thankful that the teacher spent time reading and responding to their journals. One student asked whether he/she could keep writing dialogue journals to give to the teacher, and another student hoped to have similar activities in the future.

The majority of the students had positive attitudes towards dialogue journal writing. However, some of them expressed their struggles due to the difficulties in expressing themselves in English. One student mentioned, "When I wrote dialogue journals, sometimes I did not know how to express my ideas completely in English. Even I tried to write down what I thought, I still couldn't express my ideas clearly. This made my mind blocked. I thought this was the most serious problem I encountered when I wrote dialogue journals." Another student stated that he/she was depressed when he/she couldn't express ideas clearly and the teacher couldn't understand what he/she wrote in the journals. Furthermore, five students claimed their lack of vocabulary caused them some problems. However, most of these students did not give up dialogue journal writing. The difficulties they encountered in the process of writing journals made them want to try even harder to expand their vocabulary. As one student stated, "Lacking vocabulary is my weakness, so I will try my best to obtain more knowledge about English."

### *Students' Attitudes towards the Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on Their Writing Fluency and Improvement in Writing*

Items 11 to 17, in the questionnaire, and one open-ended question, Item 22, were used to investigate junior high school students' attitudes towards the effects of dialogue journal writing on their writing fluency.

The results of these items (see Table 4.9) reveal that most of the students agreed that after writing dialogue journals, their writing fluency improved or improved a lot (Item11, 89%). None of the participants denied the effects of dialogue journal writing on their writing fluency. Seventy-nine percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed that after this dialogue journal writing project, they had learned new words that they could use words in English writing. The majority of the students agreed that dialogue journal writing was helpful or very helpful in increasing the length of their compositions (Item 13, 84%). Besides, nearly all of them not only agreed they could

write longer sentences (Item 14, 94%) but also agreed that their writing was richer in content after they participated in this project (Item 15, 84%). A sizable percentage of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had more ideas when they wrote something after the completion of this project (Item 16, 79%). Furthermore, nearly all of them thought this project helped them write more clearly (Item 17, 95%).

Table 4.9.

*Results of the Questionnaire (Students' Attitudes towards the Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on Their Writing Fluency and Improvement in Writing)*

11. After the dialogue journal writing project, did your English writing fluency improve?

|  | Yes, it improve a lot | Yes | Neutral | No | No, it didn't improve at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 21 | 68 | 11 | 0 | 0 |

12. After this dialogue journal writing project, I could use more words in English writing.

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 26 | 53 | 16 | 5 | 0 |

13. Was this project helpful in increasing the length of your composition?

|  | Very helpful | Helpful | A little helpful | Not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 42 | 42 | 16 | 0 |

14. After I participated in this project, I could write longer sentences.

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 26 | 68 | 5 | 0 | 0 |

15. After I participated in this project, my writing was richer in content.

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 16 | 68 | 11 | 5 | 0 |

16. After I participated in this project, I had more ideas when I began to write.

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 32 | 47 | 5 | 16 | 0 |

17. Did dialogue journal writing help you to write more clearly?

| | Yes, it helped a lot | Yes, it helped | Yes, it helped a little | No, it didn't help at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent | 37 | 58 | 5 | 0 |

Note: N=19

Table 4.10 shows the results of whether students could express their ideas and feelings more easily in English after the dialogue journal writing project. Among the 19 participants, 18 participants thought that they made progress in expressing themselves more easily in English. None of the participants denied the effects of dialogue journal writing. Only one student who had a neutral attitude towards this question.

Table 4.10.

*Frequencies Distribution of Responses to the Effects of Dialogue Journal Writing on English Expressions*

| Participants N=19 | I can express myself more easily | I can't express myself easily | So-so |
|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 18 | 0 | 1 |
| Percent | 95 | 0 | 5 |

Students' responses to Questionnaire Item 22 show that writing dialogue journals did help them to express their ideas and feelings more easily in English. They explained that this dialogue journal writing project offered them a very good chance to practice English writing and think in English. Most of the students believed that the more they practiced, the better their writing became. One of them claimed, "Practice makes perfect!" What they had just learned in their English textbook they could put into practice in their dialogue journal entries. This was especially helpful to their vocabulary and grammar usages. Besides, this made them more familiar with the new vocabulary and grammatical forms. In particular, another student mentioned what made him/her write more fluently. He/She stated, "After reading the teacher's

responses, I would read what I had written again. If I found some parts that were not fluent enough, I would ask my classmates for advice and take notes. This made me write more fluently." Some of the students mentioned that they were blocked when they wrote the first dialogue journal entry; however, after practicing 20 journal entries, they could write faster and longer. One student said, "Because I had to write dialogue journals in English, I tried to think in English. This made me write dialogue journals longer and longer, and I became more fluent in writing English journals." Another student mentioned the difficulty he/she encountered at the beginning. He/She stated, "At first, I had to spend a lot of time thinking what to write, and I didn't have ideas. But I can write faster after I wrote 20 journal entries." Moreover, another student noticed his/her progress after taking the post-test. He/She compared his/her performances on the pre-test and post-test and claimed, "I did not think I had a lot of progress at first, but after the post-test, I found myself write faster in the post-test than in the pre-test. This really surprised me! I am glad I wrote so many English journals, and I can't believe I have used up the whole notebook. I think I do improve a great deal."

The only student who had a neutral attitude stated that he/she just used what he/she had already known to write the journal entries, so he/she did not see any great improvement. This student thought he/she was too lazy to look up the dictionary for vocabulary he/she needed. However, he/she did use the sentence structures taught by the teacher when he/she wrote the journal entries. This helped him/her a lot.

### *Students' positive attitudes towards dialogue journal writing and its effects on their writing fluency*

According to the results of the questionnaire, students think that dialogue journal writing is helpful in improving their writing fluency, enhancing motivation in writing, building confidence, improving teacher-student communication and building their vocabulary.

Dialogue journal writing helps students to write more fluently. Nearly all of the

students reported the positive impact of dialogue journal writing on their writing fluency. The students themselves found they learned many words during the project. This is consistent with many previous studies in which students pointed out that the dialogue journal writing had a positive effect on students' writing fluency (e.g., B. Wang, 2004; Chang, 1996; Chow, 2001; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Yang, 2002). Moreover, the participants found themselves writing the journal entries quickly and easily after they practiced writing more. This is consistent with the results of Jones' (1991b) and B. Wang's (2004) studies. The students in Jones' (1991b) and B Wang's (2004) studies claimed that they wrote faster and more easily after they practiced writing dialogue journals. In the present study, most of the participants thought that dialogue journal writing helped them expand vocabulary, increase the length of their compositions, and write longer sentences. Many students stated that after they participated in this dialogue journal writing project, their writing was richer in content and they had more ideas when they began to write. Moreover, almost all of the students thought that dialogue journal writing helped them write more clearly. The students' answers to the open-ended question, Item 22, further support the positive effects of dialogue journal writing on students' writing fluency. Although some students pointed out the difficulties they had when they began to write dialogue journals, they were happy when they knew they had made progress in the process.

Furthermore, dialogue journal writing increases students' motivation in writing. In this study, 73% of the students thought that this dialogue journal writing project helped to increase their motivation to learn English composition. This is similar to the results of many previous studies (Baskin, 1994; Chen, 1996; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Jones, 1991; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Yang, 2002) which pointed out that dialogue journal writing enhanced students' motivation. It is probably because dialogue journal writing offers students a channel to communicate with the teacher, so the students have more motivation to write in English. In the present study, it was observed that many students sometimes shared with the teacher-researcher their points of view about the suggested topics based on the themes of their English textbook or a

topic of personal choice, or asked questions in their journal entries. Sometimes, they even used the journals as tools to express or make wishes. For example, when it was Teacher's Day, some of the students wrote down their good wishes to the teacher-researcher on their journal entries. Because the teacher-researcher responded to the students' journals, the students found that they had a listener and a friend. In addition, the dialogue journal writing project was not graded or corrected, so it was less threatening to the students. The teacher-researcher encouraged the students to write down what they thought. They were not afraid of making mistakes, and they just tried to express what they wanted to say in English. The students were not as frustrated as when they used to get their papers back because there were no grades and the responses were positive most of the time. Moreover, as with many previous studies (e.g., Chang, 1996; Chen, 1996; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Jones, 1991; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Shuy, 1987; Wong, 1996; Yang, 2002), many students remarked that dialogue journal writing was interesting because it provided a way for them to express themselves. This is consistent with many previous studies. Some students in the present study even wanted to continue writing dialogue journals.

Writing dialogue journals makes students become more confident in writing. The positive responses to the open-ended question, Item 23, further support the claims of the previous researchers that dialogue journal writing increases students' confidence (e.g., Baskin, 1994; Carroll, 1994; Chang, 1996; Holmes & Moulton, 1995; Lucas, 1990; Palmer, Cozean Alexander & Olson-Dinges, 1999). Like the students in the previous studies, some of the students in the present study couldn't believe that they themselves could write and communicate with the teacher-researcher in English. Practicing dialogue journals regularly and frequently lessened their fear of writing in English.

Dialogue journal writing also helps enhance the teacher-student relationship. Teachers and students can communicate through pen and paper. This offers the teacher more opportunities to understand what the students' ideas are, and the teachers also have the chance to know the students' interests. In the responses to the

open-ended question, Item 23, some of the students pointed out the positive effects on the teacher-student relationship. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies (e.g., Baskin, 1994; Peyton & Reed, 1990; Reed, 1993).

In addition, dialogue journal writing also helps students build their vocabulary. Students can learn more vocabulary from the dictionary and the responses of the teacher. In the present study, the students were not asked to use the dictionary when they wrote dialogue journal entries. However, the students used the dictionaries to find the words which they did not know in English. The participants treated dictionaries as tools which helped them understand more words and their usages. The attitudes of the EFL junior high school students were very different from those of the ESL college students in Holmes and Moulton's study (1995). The students in Holmes and Moulton's study (1995) did not think that reliance on dictionaries was good. However, the EFL junior high school students in this study found dictionaries to be helpful. Many of them claimed that this helped them to build their vocabulary knowledge, and they were happy about their progress.

A few students in the present study suggested that errors in the journal entries should be corrected. This is consistent with many previous studies in which students asked for error correction in the journal entries (e.g., B. Wang, 2004; Chow, 2001; Holmes & Moulton, 1995). However, students' attitudes towards error correction in the present study were different from those of the previous studies (B. Wang, 2004; Chow, 2001). In both cases (B. Wang, 2004; Chow, 2001), the teachers did not explain the purpose of dialogue journal writing to the students beforehand. Therefore, many students urged the teachers to correct errors in their journal entries. Different from Wang's (2004) and Chow's (2001) studies, the present study found that few students asked the teacher-researcher to correct their errors. Only three out of nineteen students suggested that the teacher-researcher correct errors in their journal entries, but they did not actually insist that the teacher-researcher correct their errors. This may be because the teacher-researcher had already explained the purpose of dialogue journal writing and the reasons for not correcting students' errors at the beginning of the

project. Therefore, the students already knew the aim of the dialogue journal writing

project.

# CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter concludes the study by first summarizing the study along with its major findings, and then presenting limitations of the study. In addition, suggestions for future studies and pedagogical implications for EFL teachers are also provided.

### Summary of the Study and Major Findings

This study investigated the effects of dialogue journal writing on EFL junior high school students' writing fluency. In addition, it also explored junior high school students' responses to the writing prompts and their attitudes towards dialogue journal writing and its effects on students' writing fluency. Thirty-eight third-year students of a junior high school in Taiwan participated in this study. The participants completed the pre-tests before the dialogue journal writing project was implemented. Then, all of the participants were randomly divided into an experimental group and a control group. The results of the pre-tests indicated that these two groups were of similar levels. Then, nineteen students in the experimental group wrote dialogue journals with the teacher-researcher twice a week for ten weeks. A total of 380 journal entries were produced. After the 10-week dialogue journal writing project, all thirty-eight participants took the post-tests. Finally, the nineteen students in the experimental group answered the questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed quantitatively and descriptively. The major findings of the study are summarized as follows.

The findings of the present study suggest that dialogue journal writing has positive impacts on students' writing fluency, especially in terms of the length of the journal entries. Generally speaking, as shown from the results of the present study, the positive effects of dialogue journal writing on the students' writing fluency were not only proved from the scientific measurements of students' dialogue journals but also

from the teacher-researcher's observation and the students' self-reports. Besides, the writing prompts of the present study also facilitated the implementation of the dialogue journal writing project. Since the students thought many topics were related to their daily lives, and they could identify with most of the writing prompts, they had positive attitudes towards dialogue journal writing, and they were motivated to write with the teacher-researcher. Thus, through the practice, their writing fluency improved in the dialogue journal writing process.

## Limitations of the Study

The study has four rather conspicuous limitations. One limitation of the present study is that the number of the participants was small. In order to exclude other variables, the teacher-researcher only included students in the same class to implement the present study. However, since the sample is small, the results can not be generalized. Another limitation is that there was not enough time for the students to practice writing dialogue journals. Writing dialogue journals twice a week for ten weeks was not a long enough period of time to recognize full development in writing fluency. Besides, the fluency measurements of clause length and T-unit length may not be appropriate to measure EFL junior high school students' writing fluency. It would be better to make use of some other assisted measurement, especially for younger EFL learners. Additionally, although the teacher-researcher followed the guidelines adopted from Polio (1997) to count the numbers of words, clauses and T-units in order to achieve intra-rater reliability, the teacher-researcher was the only rater in this present study. Thus, the inter-rater reliability was not included in this study.

## Pedagogical Implications

This study offers practitioners some ways of implementing dialogue journal

writing. It also provides an alternative way of teaching English writing in junior high schools in Taiwan. When implementing dialogue journal writing in a classroom, English teachers should take the following suggestions into consideration.

It is recommended that junior high school English teachers in Taiwan let students practice dialogue journal writing as early as possible. The junior high school students in Taiwan are not required to write English compositions. Students start writing English compositions after they enter senior high school. However, many researchers have claimed that it is very important for language learners to experiment with the written language as early as possible (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hudelson, 1989; Wigfield, 1991). This study proves the positive effects of dialogue journal writing on EFL junior high school students' writing fluency. Therefore, dialogue journal writing is appropriate for EFL junior high school students' English writing practice. Besides, due to the pressure the third-year junior high school students in Taiwan have when preparing for the Basic Competence Test, it is recommended that teachers not wait until students are in the third year of junior high school to implement dialogue journal writing. First-year junior high school students can also start to write dialogue journals.

Second, offering the writing prompts for students is a way to lessen students' struggle with what to write about in the dialogue journals. In the present study, students claimed that the writing prompts provided them with some direction. However, most of the students in B. Wang's (2004) and Chow's (2001) studies did not know what to write about in the dialogue journals. Offering the writing prompts helps lessen the students' struggle with what to write about. Since dialogue journal writing is learner-centered, students can decide what to write about. Writing prompts serve as a reference. However, the teacher should be careful when choosing the themes of the writing prompts.

It is very important that teachers and practitioners should be sensitive to students' interests when designing writing prompts. Besides, teachers who want to design writing prompts can consider topics related to students' daily lives and try to

offer prompts that are more relevant to them. Thus, students will have more ideas about the themes. In addition, teachers should also be flexible about the themes. For example, if a special event has recently happened in students' lives, the teacher is not advised to stick to the previously designed writing prompts. Changing the topic of the writing prompts to that of the current event is a good way to stimulate students' motivation to write more.

Another suggestion is to incorporate reading with dialogue journal writing (e.g., Song, 1997). In the present study, the teacher-researcher incorporated the content of the students' English textbook into the dialogue journal writing project. Providing writing prompts based on the students' English textbook offers students some vocabulary and the knowledge of sentence structures. Besides, this also offers students the opportunities to practice what they have just learned from the formal classroom setting.

Teachers are advised to make good use of the response sections of the journal entries. In this study, it was found that some students imitated what the teacher-researcher wrote after they read the teacher's responses. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers and practitioners use the response section of the dialogue journal writing entries to reinforce something new or unfamiliar to the students. Thus, students can also learn from reading teachers' responses.

In addition, teachers should try to lead students to view the difficulties they meet positively. In the dialogue journal writing process, students may encounter some difficulties in expressing themselves in English. Sometimes, the difficulties may be due to their personal limitations. It is very important for teachers to lead students to view these limitations in a positive way or maybe offer the students some suggestions and help them to overcome the problems.

Finally, offering guidelines and introducing the purpose of dialogue journal writing to the students can help them have a clearer idea about dialogue journal writing. In this study, only three students asked the teacher-researcher to correct their errors in the journal entries after they knew the reasons for dialogue journal writing.

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Therefore, as Chow (2001) suggested, it would be better if the participants could understand the nature of dialogue journal writing. One of the participants in the present study claimed, "At first, I could not help but focusing on the form, and I was afraid to make mistakes. However, after I wrote more, I did not care so much about the form. Instead, what I cared was the meaning. I thought that was why the teacher did not correct my errors." It is not necessary to correct students' errors with a red pen. The teacher can model the correct sentences in the responses to the journal entries. This is less threatening to the students.

### Suggestions for Further Research

In view of the limitations of the study stated earlier, some suggestions for future studies and research are given as follows. First, future studies may involve more subjects for data collection. Thus, the results can be more representative, reliable and valid. Future studies on dialogue journal writing may include two similar-level classes of students as the subjects to enlarge the number of the subjects.

Second, since writing is not a skill that can be improved within a short period of time, it is recommended that the time for students to practice writing dialogue journals be increased. Future studies could be conducted for more than an entire school year in order to have more data about the improvement of writing fluency in terms of clause length and T-unit length.

Third, although clause length and T-unit length have been used widely in both first and second language research, they may not be appropriate measurements of EFL junior high school students' writing fluency. Therefore, it would be better to use other assisted fluency measurements which are especially appropriate for EFL beginners.

Finally, there is a need for future studies to include not only the intra-rater reliability but also the inter-rater reliability in the studies. It is recommended that future studies include two or three raters so as to reach inter-rater reliability.

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# APPENDIX A

## Pre-test & Post-test

You will have twenty minutes to write an English composition. Please respond to the writing prompt offered by the teacher.

Theme: Pets

Writing prompt:

Do you have a pet? Tell me something about your pet. If you do not have a pet, do you want to have a pet? Why or why not? If you want to have a pet, what do you want to have as a pet? What kinds of animals do you like? Why do you like them?

# APPENDIX B

## Teacher's Writing Prompts

1. Theme: Reading

   Tell me something about reading. Do you like reading? How do you feel when you read? What do you like to read?

2. Theme: My Favorite Book & Writer

   What is your favorite book? Tell me something about the book. Why do you like this book? Who is your favorite writer? Why do you like him/her?

3. Theme: A Book Fair

   Have you ever gone to a book fair? Tell me about the experience. If you have never been to a book fair before, have you ever been to a bookstore? What did you think of the bookstore? What do you usually do when you're in a bookstore?

4. Theme: Comic Books

   Do you like to read comic books? Which comic books do you like? Please tell me something about one comic book. Why do you like it?

5. Theme: Advertisement

   Is there any advertisement that really impresses (          ) to you? What's it about? What are the functions          of advertisements? Do you believe what the advertisement says? Why or why not?

6. Theme: An Embarrassing Experience

   Have you ever had an embarrassing experience before? What happened to you? Please share your experience with me.

7. Theme: Recreational Activities

How do you spend your free time? What do you usually do in your free time? What are your favorite recreational (　　) activities?

8. Theme: Sports

What do you think about doing exercise? Do you like to do exercise? Why or why not? What sports do you like? Why? How often do you play sports?

9. Theme: Computers

Do you have a computer? What do you usually do with the computer? Do you like to play computer/on-line games? Why do you like them? Which website(s) do you like to visit most? Why do you like it/them?

10. Theme: Using Time Well

Do you use your time well? Do you have any tips on how to use time well? What are the tips? How do you arrange (　　) your time?

11. Theme: Vacation

What do you usually do during the winter or summer vacation? What did you do last winter vacation?

12. Theme: Traveling

Do you like to go traveling? What is your most unforgettable traveling experience? Where would you like to go most? Why?

13. Theme: Missing Persons

There are many missing persons nowadays. Many of the missing persons are teenagers. They are missing not because they have got lost. They choose to run away. Why do you think they choose to run away? How can we help them? Do

you have any friends who were/are missing persons? Tell me something about them.

14. Theme: Facing Problems

Do you sometimes feel helpless about something? When you have a problem, what do you usually do? Do you tell your problems to your parents, friends, or teachers?

15. Theme: Graduation Trip

We just took a trip to Taipei. How was the trip? Did anything special happen? Please share your experience.

16. Theme: Traveling Around the World

Do you want to travel around the world? Why or why not?

17. Theme: Different Ways of Traveling

People travel in different ways and you can choose your own. You can travel alone or with a group of people. You can choose to stay in a five-star hotel or in a cheap Bed & Breakfast. Which do you prefer? Why?

18. Theme: Learning English

Do you like English? What ways do you use to learn English? Is speaking English difficult for you? Do you have any tips on learning English?

19. Theme: Cultural Differences

Have you ever noticed that Taiwan and America have different cultures? What are the differences? When learning a foreign language, is it important to know about the culture of the language? Why or why not?

20. Theme: American English and British English

Where is English spoken? Do you think English is different in these countries? Please give me some examples. What kind of English are we learning?

# APPENDIX C

## Questionnaire

各位同學：

非常感謝你參與本次的對話日誌寫作活動，本問卷的目的在於了解你們對這次對話日誌寫作的看法及意見，問卷題項沒有標準答案，請依題目的敘述勾選你個人的看法及意見。同時提醒你，問卷所有題項，請務必全數作答，再次感謝你的參與。

一、個人基本資料

　　請勾選與您個人基本資料符合的敘述。

1. 性別：　□女　　　□男

2. 何時開始學習英文？　□國中　□國小　　□學齡前

3. 是否曾參加過校外英文寫作之補習？□是　□否


二、對話日誌寫作之意見調查

1. 你每次花多少時間完成對話日誌寫作？

　　□少於20分鐘　□ 少於1小時　□1~2小時　□2小時以上

2. 你覺得這份對話日誌作業的難易度如何？

　　□非常困難　　□困難　　□適中　　□容易　　□非常容易

3. 你覺得每週交兩次作業，對你的負擔如何？

　　□負擔太重　□有一點負擔　□沒有意見　□沒有什麼負擔　□完全沒有負擔

4. 你是否曾缺交或遲交過作業？

　　□ 是　　□ 否 答「是」者，請繼續做第 5 題；答「否」者，請跳至第 7 題

5. 你會不會事後補交作業？

　　□ 會　　□ 不會 答「會」者，請跳至第 7 題；答「不會」者，請跳至第 6 題

6. 請勾選不會事後補交作業的理由，**可複選**:

□ 忘記了　　□ 沒有時間　　□ 對英文沒有興趣

□ 做作業對英文進步不會有幫助　　□ 不在乎加不加分

□ 沒有全班一起進行，所以我也不做

□ 不喜歡做作業的指定活動（活動設計無趣或無挑戰性等）

其他理由：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

7. 你覺得自己做這份對話日誌寫作的用心程度如何？

□ 非常用心　　□ 用心　　□ 沒有意見　　□ 不用心　　□ 非常不用心

8. 你覺得寫這整個對話日誌寫作的作業有趣嗎？

□ 非常有趣　　□ 還算有趣　　□ 沒有意見　　□ 無趣　　□ 非常無趣

9. 你覺得對話日誌寫作的設計，有助於學習英文嗎？

□ 非常有幫助　　□ 有幫助　　□ 沒有意見　　□ 沒有幫助　　□ 非常沒有幫助

10. 你覺得對話日誌寫作方式，對提昇學習英文作文的意願有無幫助？

□ 非常有幫助　　□ 有幫助　　□ 沒有意見　　□ 沒有幫助　　□ 完全沒有幫助

11. 透過這種方式學習以後，你覺得自己在英文寫作的流利度上，有沒有進步？

□ 進步很大　　□ 有進步　　□ 沒有意見　　□ 沒有進步　　□ 完全沒有進步

12. 參與這個活動後，我在英文寫作上，能使用較多的字彙於寫作。

□ 非常同意　　□ 同意　　□ 沒有意見　　□ 不同意　　□ 非常不同意

13. 參與這個活動後，對增加你的英文作文長度有沒有幫助？

□ 有很大的幫助　　□ 有一些幫助　　□ 只有一點點幫助　　□ 完全沒有幫助

14. 參與本活動後，我能寫出較長的句子。

□ 非常同意　　□ 同意　　□ 沒有意見　　□ 不同意　　□ 非常不同意

15. 參與本活動後，我寫作的內容更加充實。

□ 非常同意　　□ 同意　　□ 沒有意見　　□ 不同意　　□ 非常不同意

16. 參與本活動後，當我開始寫作時，我的腦筋比較不會一片空白。

□ 非常同意　　□ 同意　　□ 沒有意見　　□ 不同意　　□ 非常不同意

17. 對話日誌寫作對於你清楚的用英文寫下自己的想法有多大的幫助？

☐ 有很大的幫助 ☐ 有一些幫助　☐ 只有一點點幫助 ☐ 完全沒有幫助

18. 你覺得自己的作業是否得到了足夠的回饋、回應或建議？

☐ 非常足夠　　☐ 足夠　　☐ 沒有意見　　☐ 不夠　　☐ 非常不足

19. 你的老師會針對你的日記來回應你。你認為這些回應對你有多大的幫助？

☐ 有很大的幫助 ☐ 有一些幫助　☐ 只有一點點幫助 ☐ 完全沒有幫助

20. 每次的對話日誌寫作，老師都有提供你一些寫作的主題和問題做為參考。你認為這些寫作的主題對你的日記寫作有多大的幫助？

☐ 有很大的幫助 ☐ 有一些幫助　☐ 只有一點點幫助 ☐ 完全沒有幫助

21. 在對話日誌寫作中，你比較喜歡寫老師所提供的主題或者是你自己所選擇的題目？為什麼？

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. 在對話日誌寫作之後，你是否能比較流利的用英文寫作來表達你的想法和意思？為什麼？

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. 請寫出你對於對話日誌寫作這個活動的感想。

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

24. 關於這個對話日誌寫作的作業，你還有沒有其他意見要告訴老師？（例如：
    你的建議；過程中你所遭遇的難題等等…）

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

# APPENDIX D

## Questionnaire (English Version)

### I. Background information

1. Gender:  ☐ Female  ☐ Male

2. When did you first start to learn English?

   ☐ Junior high school  ☐ Elementary school  ☐ Pre-school

3. Have you ever taken an English composition cram course before?

   ☐ Yes.  ☐ No.

### II. Opinions and attitudes towards dialogue journal writing

1. How much time did you spend on each dialogue journal entry?

   ☐ Less than 20 minutes. ☐ Less than 1 hour. ☐ 1 to 2 hours. ☐ More than 2 hours.

2. Did you think this dialogue journal writing was difficult?

   ☐ Very difficult.  ☐ Difficult.  ☐ So-so.  ☐ Easy.  ☐ Very easy.

3. In this project, you had to hand in your journal twice a week. What did you think about the workload?

   ☐ It was too heavy.  ☐ A little too heavy.  ☐ Neutral.  ☐ Not so heavy.

   ☐ No workload.

4. Have you ever not handed in the assignment or handed it in late?

   ☐ Yes.  ☐ No.  (If your answer is "Yes," please answer Question 5; if your answer is "No," please answer Question 7.)

5. Did you hand in your journal later?

   ☐ Yes.  ☐ No.  (If your answer is "Yes," please answer Question 7; if your answer is "No," please answer Question 6.)

6. Please make a check in the box next to the reason(s) that you did not hand in your journal later:

   ☐ I forgot.  ☐ I had no time.  ☐ I am not interested in English.

☐ This assignment does not help to improve my English.

☐ I don't care about the bonus points.

☐ Not every one in the class has to do it, so I didn't want to do it either.

☐ I don't like this dialogue journal writing project.

Other reasons：_____

7. Did you try your best to finish this dialogue journal writing project?

☐ Very hard.　　☐ Hard.　☐ Neutral.　☐ Not hard enough.　☐ Not hard.

8. Was the dialogue journal writing assignment interesting?

☐ Very interesting. ☐ Interesting. ☐ Neutral. ☐ Not interesting. ☐ Very boring.

9. Was this dialogue journal writing project helpful in learning English?

☐ Very helpful. ☐ Helpful.　☐ Neutral.　☐ Not helpful.　☐ Not helpful at all.

10. Was this dialogue journal writing project helpful in increasing your motivation to learn how to write an English composition?

☐ Very helpful.　☐ Helpful.　☐ Neutral.　☐ Not helpful.　☐ Not helpful at all.

11. After the dialogue journal writing project, did your English writing fluency improve?

☐ Yes, it improved a lot.　☐ Yes.　☐ Neutral.　☐ No.　☐ No, it didn't improve at all.

12. After this dialogue journal writing project, I could use more words in English writing.

☐ Strongly agree.　☐ Agree.　☐ Neutral.　☐ Disagree.　☐ Strongly disagree.

13. Was this project helpful in increasing the length of your composition?

☐ Very helpful.　☐ Helpful.　☐ A little helpful.　☐ Not helpful at all.

14. After I participated in this project, I could write longer sentences.

☐ Strongly agree.　☐ Agree.　☐ Neutral.　☐ Disagree.　☐ Strongly disagree.

15. After I participated in this project, my writing was richer in content.

☐ Strongly agree.　☐ Agree.　☐ Neutral.　☐ Disagree.　☐ Strongly disagree.

16. After I participated in this project, I had more ideas when I began to write.

☐ Strongly agree.　☐ Agree.　☐ Neutral.　☐ Disagree.　☐ Strongly disagree.

17. Did dialogue journal writing help you to write more clearly?

☐Yes, it helped a lot.　☐ Yes, it helped.　☐ Yes, it helped a little.　☐ No, it didn't help at all.

18. Did you have enough feedback or suggestions in your journal entries?

☐ Yes, I had a lot of feedback or suggestions.　☐ Enough.　☐ Neutral.

☐ Not enough.　☐ No, I didn't have enough feedback or suggestions.

19. Your teacher responded to your journal entries. Do you think the responses were helpful?

☐Yes, very helpful.　☐ Yes, helpful.　☐A little helpful.　☐ No, not helpful at all.

20. The teacher offered you a writing prompt for every dialogue journal writing entry. Do you think the writing prompts were helpful?

☐Yes, very helpful.　☐ Yes, helpful.　☐A little helpful.　☐ No, not helpful at all.

21. In the dialogue journal writing project, did you prefer the teacher's writing prompts or your own topics? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. After the dialogue journal writing project, could you express your ideas and feelings more easily in English? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. Please write down what you think about this dialogue journal writing project.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

24. Do you have anything else you would like to share with your teacher about this dialogue journal writing project? (e.g., your suggestions or the problems you have when writing dialogue journals, and so on)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**APPENDIX E**

**Guidelines for Dialogue Journal Writing**

Dialogue Journal Writing

To the student:

Dialogue journal writing will help you improve your ability to write in English. You learn to write by writing. Dialogue journal writing is like a written conversation between you and the teacher. You can respond to the teacher's questions or write about whatever you want to write about. A journal is like a diary, a record of your activities, memories, experiences, feelings, observations, reactions, etc. Your goal in writing the journal is to get your ideas down in writing; your grammar and spelling, though important, will not be evaluated. Your journal entries will not be graded but the teacher will respond to them. However, the teacher will give you bonus points according to the length of your journal entries.

1. Each student should prepare a notebook to be used only for writing dialogue journals. You can decorate the covers or the content of your journals as you like.

2. Each student has to write to the teacher twice a week. You have to hand in your dialogue journal every Tuesday and Friday.

3. Try to express what you want to talk about only in English. You can write as much as you like. However, each entry of your dialogue journal should have at least five sentences.

4. You can respond to the writing prompts offered by the teacher. The prompts are related to the themes of the English textbook. However, you may write about whatever you want to share with the teacher. You may just want to write about your feelings or something not directly related to the course content.

5. The teacher will not grade your journals. The teacher will respond to your content or ask you questions according to what you write. She will not correct errors in the journal. However, when the teacher finds frequently made mistakes, she will sometimes point them out or correct them for you.

6. If you hand in your journal entries on time and they are the required length or even longer, you will earn some bonus points.

| Requirement | Bonus |
|---|---|
| Write 5 sentences and hand in on time | +1 |
| Write 6-10 sentences and hand in on time | +2 |
| Write 11-15 sentences and hand in on time | +3 |
| Write 16-20 sentences and hand in on time | +4 |
| Write more than 21 sentences and hand in on time | +5 |

|  |  |
|---|---|
| 5 | +1 |
| 6-10 | +2 |
| 11-15 | +3 |
| 16-20 | +4 |
| 21 | +5 |

**Sample- Student's Journal & Teacher's Response**


**September 23, 2004 (Cindy's Journal)**

I love to go traveling, especially go abroad. It's fun and relax. Besides, I can see many different cultures and beautiful scenery. I really want to go to Hokkaido though I have never been there. It's famous for its beautiful scenery which includes clear lakes and huge forests. In Hokkaido, the city Sapporo is characterized by its particular history and natural beauty. I think it's the best place to visit Japan. I hope I have the chance go there. Traveling around the world is my dream. It's a cool thing for me. I can visit every place in the world and eat delicious food. I hope one day I can realize my dream.

Thank you for encouraging me. Now I have more confidence. I will study harder and harder. I hope I will progress.


**Teacher's response:**

Dear Cindy,

You are very welcome! Everyone will face certain kind of problems or challenges in their lives. The most important thing is to face them bravely and overcome them!

I went to Hokkaido last winter vacation. Actually, my family and I spent our Chinese New Year there. I remember everything was "white" there. The scenery was just like the pictures on Christmas cards. It was really fantastic. Hokkaido is really a good place. I recommend that you go there in the future!

<div style="text-align:right">

Feiwen

September 26, 2004

</div>

# APPENDIX G

## Guidelines for word counts, clauses, and T-units (adopted from Polio, 1997)

**Word count**

a.  Count contractions as one word whether correct or not.

b.  Count numbers as one word.

c.  Count proper nouns in English and in other languages as they are written.

d.  Do not count hyphenated words as single words. (e.g., well-written = 2 words).

e.  Don't include the calling in front of the dialogue journal entry or the essay titles in the word count. (e.g., Dear Ann / My Recreational Activities).

f.  Count words as they are written, even if they are incorrect. (alot= 1 word).

**Clauses**

a.  A clause equals an overt subject and a finite verb. The following are only one clause each:

He left the house and drove away.

He wanted John to leave the house.

b.  Only an imperative does not require a subject to be considered a clause.

c.  In a sentence that has a subject with only an auxiliary verb, do not count that subject and verb as a separate clause or as a separate T-unit. (e.g., John likes to ski and Mary does, too; John likes to ski, doesn't he?; John is happy and Mary is too.)

**T-units**

a.  A T-unit is defined as an independent clause and all its dependent clauses.

b.  Count run-on sentences and comma splices as two T-units.

e.g., My school was in Saudi Arabia, it was the best school there.

<div align="center">T         /         T</div>

c.  For sentence fragments, if the verb or copula is missing, count the sentence as 1 T-unit. If an NP is standing alone, attach it to the preceding or following T-unit as appropriate. If a subordinate clause is standing alone, attach it to the preceding or following S and count it as 1 T-unit.

d.  When there is a grammatical subject deletion in a coordinate clause, count the entire sentence as 1 T-unit.

e.g., First we went to our school and then went out with our friends.

e.  Count both "so" and "but" as coordinating conjunctions. Count "so that" as subordinating conjunction unless "so" is obviously meant.

f.  Do not count tag-questions as separate T-units.

g.  Count S-nodes with a deleted complementizer as a subordinate clause as in:

I believe that A and (that) B= 1 T-unit.

h.  But, direct quotes should be counted as:

John said, "A        and B."

1 T-unit        1 T-unit

i.  Count T-units in parentheses as individual T-units.

Sample--Honey's Posttest (Text with T-unit recorded & Length)

1. I had two dogs before.

2. But they were died.

3. I still want to have pets now.

4. They can play with me when I am sad.

5. I can also take them to a park.

6. Then, they and I can do exercise together.

7. If I can keep a pet, I want a mouse or a rabbit.

8. They are both cute.

9. I like small animals,

10. but big ones are good, too.

11. I've dreamed about keeping a lion or a tiger when I was a little girl.

12. I think they are cool

13. and everyone will envy me.

14. I could ride them to go to school.

15. That will be fun, won't it?

16. I told my sister about that,

17. but she laugh loudly.

18. She said they won't listen to me.

19. Maybe they will bite me.

20. I was afraid of that. So I don't want to keep a lion or a tiger now.

21. I think we will have some fish soon. Because my father and brother like fish.

22. Maybe they will buy some fish for me.

23. That's so exciting.

24. I can't wait!

25. Some fish is colorful and beautiful.

26. They are also cute, right?

Total number of words: 186      Total T-units: 26

Sample--Honey's Posttest (Text with Clause recorded)

1. I had two dogs before.

2. But they were died.

3. I still want to have pets now.

4. They can play with me.

5. when I am sad.

6. I can also take them to a park.

7. Then, they and I can do exercise together.

8. If I can keep a pet,

9. I want a mouse or a rabbit.

10. They are both cute.

11. I like small animals,

12. but big ones are good, too.

13. I've dreamed about keeping a lion or a tiger

14. when I was a little girl.

15. I think

16. they are cool

17. and everyone will envy me.

18. I could ride them to go to school.

19. That will be fun, won't it?

20. I told my sister about that,

21. but she laugh loudly.

22. She said

23. they won't listen to me.

24. Maybe they will bite me.

25. I was afraid of that.

26. So I don't want to keep a lion or a tiger now.

27. I think

28. we will have some fish soon.

29. Because my father and brother like fish.

30. Maybe they will buy some fish for me.

31. That's so exciting.

32. I can't wait!

33. Some fish is colorful and beautiful.

34. They are also cute, right?


Total clauses: 34

# APPENDIX H

## Results of the Questionnaire

1. How much time did you spend on each dialogue journal entry?

| Participants N=19 | Less than 20 minutes | Less than 1 hour | 1 to 2 hours | More than 2 hours |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 5 | 13 | 1 | 0 |
| Percent | 26 | 68 | 5 | 0 |

2. Did you think this dialogue journal writing was difficult?

| Participants N=19 | Very difficult | Difficult | So-so | Easy | Very easy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 0 | 3 | 13 | 2 | 1 |
| Percent | 0 | 16 | 68 | 11 | 5 |

3. In this project, you had to hand in your journal twice a week. What did you think about the workload?

| Participants N=19 | It was too heavy | A little too heavy | Neutral | Not so heavy | No workload |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 0 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 1 |
| Percent | 0 | 26 | 21 | 47 | 5 |

4. Have you ever not handed in the assignment or handed it in late?

| Participants N=19 | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 10 | 9 |
| Percent | 53 | 47 |

5. Did you hand in your journal later?

| Participants N=10 | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 10 | 0 |
| Percent | 100 | 0 |

7. Did you try your best to finish this dialogue journal writing project?

| Participants N=19 | Very hard | Hard | Neutral | Not hard enough | Not hard |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 2 | 12 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Percent | 11 | 63 | 21 | 5 | 0 |

8. Was the dialogue journal writing assignment interesting?

| Participants N=19 | Very interesting | Interesting | Neutral | Not interesting | Very boring |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 4 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Percent | 21 | 53 | 26 | 0 | 0 |

9. Was this dialogue journal writing project helpful in learning English?

| Participants N=19 | Very helpful | Helpful | Neutral | Not helpful | Not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 8 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Percent | 42 | 47 | 11 | 0 | 0 |

10. Was this dialogue journal writing project helpful in increasing your motivation to learn how to write an English composition?

| Participants N=19 | Very helpful | Helpful | Neutral | Not helpful | Not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 5 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Percent | 26 | 47 | 16 | 11 | 0 |

11. After the dialogue journal writing project, did your English writing fluency improve?

| Participants N=19 | Yes, it improved a lot | Yes | Neutral | No | No, it didn't improve at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 4 | 13 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Percent | 21 | 68 | 11 | 0 | 0 |

12. After this dialogue journal writing project, I could use more words in English writing.

| Participants N=19 | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 5 | 10 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Percent | 26 | 53 | 16 | 5 | 0 |

13. Was this project helpful in increasing the length of your compositions?

| Participants N=19 | Very helpful | Helpful | A little helpful | Not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 8 | 8 | 3 | 0 |
| Percent | 42 | 42 | 16 | 0 |

14. After I participated in this project, I could write longer sentences.

| Participants N=19 | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 5 | 13 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Percent | 26 | 68 | 5 | 0 | 0 |

15. After I participated in this project, my writing was richer in content.

| Participants N=19 | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 3 | 13 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Percent | 16 | 68 | 11 | 5 | 0 |

16. After I participated in this project, I had more ideas when I began to write.

| Participants N=19 | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 6 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Percent | 32 | 47 | 5 | 16 | 0 |

17. Did dialogue journal writing help you to write more clearly?

| Participants N=19 | Yes, it helped a lot | Yes, it helped | Yes, it helped a little | No, it didn't help at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 7 | 11 | 1 | 0 |
| Percent | 37 | 58 | 5 | 0 |

18. Did you have enough feedback or suggestions in your journal entries?

| Participants N=19 | Yes, I had a lot | Enough | Neutral | Not enough | No, I didn't |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 4 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Percent | 21 | 53 | 16 | 11 | 0 |

19. Your teacher responded to your journal entries. Do you think the responses were helpful?

| Participants N=19 | Yes, very helpful | Yes, helpful | A little helpful | No, not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 10 | 6 | 3 | 0 |
| Percent | 53 | 32 | 16 | 0 |

20. The teacher offered you a writing prompt for every dialogue journal writing entry. Do you think the writing prompts were helpful?

| Participants N=19 | Yes, very helpful | Yes, helpful | A little helpful | No, not helpful at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 7 | 7 | 5 | 0 |
| Percent | 37 | 37 | 26 | 0 |