

Developing the Southern Thailand pre-service teachers' writing skills through Reading to Learn

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ABSTRACT

For English as a Foreign Language learners, writing is often considered a difficult skill to grasp with. Studies show that both EFL learners and teachers face similar challenges in developing EFL writing ability. This includes inadequate exposure to English, class size, insufficient knowledge of how language works in context, and mother tongue interferences which are believed to be the major challenges for both learners and teachers. This paper reports on an action research project aiming to identify the overall development of pre-service teachers' skills in writing discussion texts and explore how the Reading to Learn (R2L) intervention helps these pre-service teachers develop their control over the target genre. Under the R2L approach, thirty (30) second-year pre-service teachers majoring in English language teaching at the Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus involved in the study. Results of the study suggest that the pre-service teachers' writing skill gap was relatively neutralised after the intervention. In addition, the development of the pre-service teachers' control over the target genre and language features is evident in text analysis. Upon the intervention, it is found that the pre-service teachers developed better control of the features of the discussion genre. Specifically, they developed their control over the stages, phases, appraisal resources, and periodicity which are crucial to establishing well-presented rhetorical features of a discussion text. In relation to the results, some recommendations are proposed for further research, including applying the R2L intervention program in the mainstream education in Thailand.

Keywords: Discussion text; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); pre-service teachers; Reading to Learn (R2L); Systemic Functional Linguistics

First Received:

26 February 2023

Revised:

19 May 2023

Accepted:

25 May 2023

Final Proof Received:

27 May 2023

Published:

31 May 2023

How to cite (in APA style):

Mamac, M. H., & Bangsa, L. A. (2023). Developing the Southern Thailand pre-service teachers' writing skills through Reading to Learn. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 13(1), 84-98. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v13i1.58258>

INTRODUCTION

Challenges in teaching writing in Thai EFL contexts

Writing is a challenging skill to develop, especially to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. In Thailand, issues relating to the development of Thai EFL learners' writing ability had been largely identified and documented in numerous studies (e.g., Intasena & Nuangchalerm, 2022; Loan Nguyen &

Suwannabubpha, 2021; Noom-Ura, 2013). From those studies, we can categorise the problems into two: ones that have to do with teachers and another with students. For teachers, the major concerns on developing EFL students writing ability comprise several aspects, such as lack of skills and experience in teaching English writing, lack of exposure to the English language, insufficient language and cultural skills in English, and unmanageable class size and

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teaching loads. For students of EFL in Thai context, the situation is not significantly different. Thai EFL learners face challenges such as inadequate exposure to the English language, low motivation for learning, low self-confidence in using the language (Dhanasobhon, 2007; Noom-Ura, 2013; Wiriyaichitra, 2002), insufficient linguistic knowledge in terms of spelling and meaning, both in reading and writing (Intasena & Nuangchalerm, 2022), and native language interference in learning the target language (Phuket & Othman, 2015). In addition, other studies have pointed out the impact of the late introduction of English writing lessons in the Thai curriculum – it has a serious consequence for the development of the learners’ writing skills (Loan Nguyen & Suwannabubpha, 2021). A major impact of the above issues can be seen, for example, among those lecturers and students in Thai leading universities in that only those who undertook English as a major had the experience in writing full English texts (Dueraman, 2015). This leads to a simultaneous struggle experienced by both teachers and students in English writing courses. On one hand, teachers work hard to prepare students with the necessary resources for developing their skills. On the other hand, students find it difficult to grasp with the knowledge of language needed to succeed in those courses.

Current initiatives have been undertaken to address the issues by means of different approaches to teaching EFL writing across levels of education. At the secondary and high school levels, for example, Dokchandra (2018) utilised the process approach to resolve the management of teaching writing for large classes in a Northeast Thailand secondary school. Based on the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, it was found that the intervention utilising the process approach resulted in a significant improvement of students’ ability to write. Moreover, students gave positive opinions about their experience during the intervention program. In a similar vein, Woottipong (2020) explored the contributions of some elements of teaching writing to Thai EFL learners writing performance. The study found out that planning strategies, adequate linguistic knowledge, peer support, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations greatly contribute to the achievement in the course. At the university level, McDonough et al. (2014) explored how explicit instruction in paragraph writing and paraphrasing can affect the learners’ summary writing. The pre-test and the post-test scores showed that proper citations were improved, alongside the decrease in copying long word strings from the source texts.

In relation to the initiatives above, other studies has been carried out particularly by investigating the contribution of linguistically grounded solutions to developing Thai EFL learners’ writing ability. Arunsiro (2013), for instance, in their Theme¹ analysis of paragraphs written by university students, pointed out that the major writing issue experienced by the students include a misappropriate use of textual resources such as empty Theme, Theme consistency, and the overuse of textual Theme. Phuket and Othman (2015) and Bennui (2016) discovered rather similar issues faced by Thai EFL university students. These issues comprised the direct translation of Thai words into English, inappropriate lexical choices, subject-verb agreement errors, uses of verb tenses, preposition, and comma. Such issues may be apparent for Thai academics as well. Issues relating to the deployment of textual resources are evident in the manuscripts drafted by Thai academics (Currie et al., 2016). Thus, it can be said that all the previous studies mentioned among other things that textual resources become a major area to be addressed, both by Thai EFL students and academics.

Responding to the situations previously elaborated, a current alternative intervention gaining its presence in Thailand to address the EFL writing issues is the Sydney school genre-based pedagogy. It is a literacy program developed by a group of scholars in Australia that aims to “enable any student, irrespective of their backgrounds, to succeed with the writing demands of the schools” (Rose & Martin, 2012, p. 1). The approach has been used to equip university students in writing different target genres such as expositions, discussions (Chaisiri, 2010; Kongpetch, 2006; Srinon, 2011); recounts and procedure (Chaisiri, 2010); descriptions, reports, and explanations (Sritrakarn, 2020); editorials, and news reports (Suksawas, 2018); and reading comprehension activities (Ramnath, 2018). The studies identified several positive outcomes of the intervention such as preparing students with relevant understanding of the purpose of the genre, control over the target texts’ linguistic features, widening of linguistic resources to establish relationships with the readers, discussion of complex ideas of a specific field, and creation of comprehension questions inclusive of several learning styles, e.g., visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic. The approach has been developed over decades of research since the 1980s (Rose & Martin, 2012), which has produced different pedagogical sub-models². Among the studies conducted in Thailand, hardly ever has used the R2L

¹ Theme is a concept in SFL which involves the organization of “clause to show what its local context is in relation to the general context of the text it serves in” Martin, J. R., Matthiessen, C. M. I. M., & Painter, C. (2010). *Deploying Functional Grammar*. Commercial Press.

<https://books.google.com.au/books?id=Tn7RZwEA CAAJ>

² For some of the pedagogical models of the Sydney School genre-pedagogy, including the canonical Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), see e.g., Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (1993). *The power of literacy*

the approach the present study is grounded on. Moreover, the R2L approach focuses on language, informed by holistic linguistics theory, and thus has a richer understanding of how language works for preparing students to write (see Section below for a discussion on R2L).

The study reported in this paper is a response to the issue of EFL writing in Thai contexts in that R2L methodology is deployed to address the issue. In the Southernmost provinces of Thailand – the specific context of the study – exposure to the English language is limited. English is hardly used in the everyday domain, and international tourism is scarce. However, it is essential in tertiary academic environment in which students are apprenticed into science as a discipline and English are required to read and write (Mamac & Bangga, 2022). The limited domain of English displaces the pragmatic aspect of it, leaving some of the students' perception of the language decontextualised compared to Arabic and Malay-yu³ (see Assalihee & Boonsuk, 2022).

The issues in EFL writing can be addressed by the R2L, as the R2L draws from the whole text down to the smallest linguistic unit instead of ending at the clause-level (see next section for details on R2L). Teacher training is a crucial stage as it provides the fundamental skills and preparation for teaching writing. In Thailand, tertiary students who study to become teachers are called pre-service teachers. Grounded on this belief, the study chose to conduct the intervention program utilising R2L to a group of pre-service teachers. One of the essential aspects of the intervention is to develop their knowledge and skills in writing the target genres. This is addressed by experiencing the R2L approach first-hand as “students” and being able to write the target genres themselves. This paper, specifically, reports on the pre-service teachers' development of writing discussion genre aiming to persuade readers by discussing two or more sides of an issue (Martin & Rose, 2008). The discussion genre is chosen as it is one of the target genres of the Thai Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 identified in the linguistic needs analysis, the early stages of the research project (see Mamac & Bangga, 2022; Mamac et al., 2021 for some discussion on the early stage of the project). Against those backdrops, the paper thus aims to (1)

identify the overall development of the preservice teachers' skills in writing discussion texts, and (2) explore how the R2L intervention affect pre-service teachers' control of the target genre.

Reading to learn

R2L is the latest generation of the well-known ‘Sydney School’ genre pedagogy. It extends and integrates the principles of embedded literacy that has been the central element in Sydney School, focusing on the teaching of reading and writing across the curriculum, ranging across elementary to tertiary education and beyond. It aims “for all students to learn independently from reading, and successfully demonstrate their learning through writing” (Rose, 2020). Initially developed to facilitate indigenous students from remote communities in Central Australia (Rose & Martin, 2012), R2L now has been implemented in the mainstream education program in Australia (Carusi-Lees, 2017), and has been becoming a prominent embedded literacy program adopted by teachers and educationalists in Asia (Kartika-Ningsih, 2015; Kartika-Ningsih & Gunawan, 2019; Shum et al., 2018), South America (Herazo Rivera et al., 2021), North America (Ramírez, 2020; Rose, 2014), and Western Europe (Acevedo & Löfstedt, 2014; Coffin et al., 2013; Gouveia, 2014; Whittaker & Acevedo, 2016).

One major influence on the development of R2L is Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning. This theory proposes that learning occurs through the construction of knowledge with a knowledgeable other. In other words, the expansion and development of knowledge can be optimally achieved when learners are given tasks beyond their independent skill levels with the guidance of a knowledgeable other, among others are parents and teachers. Technically, this is called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1962). Grounded on this notion, R2L believes that the skill and knowledge gap between the learners can be narrowed by giving them consistent high-level reading and writing tasks with the teacher's guidance as opposed to the progressivist approach where learners are given different levels of tasks depending on what the learners can do on their own (Rose & Martin, 2012). The narrowing of the learners' skill gap through

and the literacy of power. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Powers of Literacy: A text-type approach to teaching writing* (pp. 63-89). Routledge, Macken-Horarik, M., Martin, J. R., Kress, G., Kalantzis, M., Rothery, J., & Cope, W. (1989). *An approach to writing K-12*. N. D. o. Education, Murray, N., & Zammit, C. (1992). *The action pack: Animals (Activities for teaching factual writing)*. Metropolitan East DSP (language and Social Power Project)., *The report genre*. (1989). Disadvantaged Schools Program., Rothery, J. (1994). *Exploring literacy in school English (Write*

It Right resources for literacy and learning). Metropolitan East Disadvantaged Schools Program.
³ The preference of the learners to learn Arabic, the language of Quran, is due to the dominance of the Islamic religion in the region, which also led to the proliferation of Islamic private schools Assalihee, M., & Boonsuk, Y. (2022). Factors Obstructing English Teaching Effectiveness: Teacher Voices from Thailand's Deep South. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 10(1), 155-172. Malay-yu on another note, is the Southern region's dominant mother-tongue (see participants and context section).

continuous practice and various level of guidance is one of the R2L's aims.

In an R2L intervention program, the construction of knowledge happens through the learners' negotiation with a knowledgeable other, which, in classroom context, is their teacher. The teacher provides meaningful supports in terms of the knowledge of language grounded on a functional approach to language, especially that of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This includes designing classroom interactions that can accommodate more comprehensive understanding of the reading texts being taught. The interaction needs to be explicit (Rose & Martin, 2012) in that it provides a highly predictable and unambiguous guidance realised in a series of cycle. In this interaction, teachers can draw students' attention to focus on the reading text that is being negotiated, then asking the students to identify features of the text. Following from the identification of features, teachers need to affirm their responses, whether they are suitable or not. In addition to these cycles of interaction, in the actual teaching activities, students can be prepared to look at something in the text, i.e., through focus questions and upon proposing an answer or responding to it, teachers may elaborate students' responses in various ways to reinforce their comprehension of the features (see Rose & Martin, 2012 for further discussion on principles behind R2L).

In addition to designing meaningful classroom interaction surrounding reading tasks, R2L relies primarily on SFL model of text and context (Martin, 2019; Martin & Rose, 2007, 2008) to provide meaningful supports regarding knowledge about language required by students to tackle various genres. This knowledge about language is essential for two reasons. Firstly, it is needed by teachers and

students when negotiating language features in the reading texts. It serves as 'pedagogic metalanguage' (Rose & Martin, 2012). Through this model of text in context, teachers need to analyse the texts 'top-down' starting from genre – the social purpose that the text is trying to achieve – down to discourse semantics, patterns of meaning in text; and to lexicogrammar, patterns of meaning in clauses. If necessary, they may go further down by looking at spelling – graphology. This linguistic model of analysing text is important to selecting and analysing features of texts which will be used for teaching. In relation to the discussion genre, such analytical model provides teacher with rhetorical features for persuasion, key evaluative meanings, and organisation of arguments, to mention a few. Secondly, by doing the analysis through SFL model of text and context (Mamac & Bangsa, 2022), it will provide teachers with an opportunity to design an assessment pertinent to the genres that they are teaching. In other words, teachers can recontextualise (Bernstein, 2000) the assessment to meet the curriculum demands. Assessment in R2L focuses on all levels of comprehension simultaneously (Rose, 2020). This means that through R2L, students are guided explicitly to recognise meanings across level, such as contextual meanings: genre and register, and meanings in language: paragraph, clause, groups, and words. It is intended that the analysis can help students to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of how texts work in context as they read.

The R2L approach was chosen among others due to its detailed, explicit, and step-by-step processes. It may be easier for the pre-service teachers to understand and adjust to the approach as it somehow fits both the traditional Thai teaching and learning styles⁴, and the communicative method⁵ emphasised in the latest Thai Basic Education Core

⁴ Studies have pointed out the use of grammar-translation method as the most common language teaching and learning style in Thailand as it grounds on the learners' mother tongue to explicitly teach the grammar of L2 Arunsirot, S. (2013). An Analysis of Textual Metafunction in Thai EFL Students' Writing. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 7(2)., Bennui, P. (2016). A study of L1 interference in the writing of Thai EFL students. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research*, 4(1), 31. , Phuket, P. R. N., & Othman, N. B. (2015). Understanding EFL Students' Errors in Writing. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(32), 99-106. , Tieocharoen, W., & Rimkeeratikul, S. (2019). Learning strategies and teaching methods in Thai and Vietnamese universities. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume, 10*. R2L recognises the important role of mother tongue in language learning. For example, Kartika-Ningsih, H. (2015). *Multilingual re-instantiation: Genre pedagogy in Indonesian classrooms* [PhD Thesis, The University

of Sydney]. Sydney eScholarship. Sydney. <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/14543>, Kartika-Ningsih, H., & Gunawan, W. (2019). Recontextualisation of genre-based pedagogy: The case of Indonesian EFL classrooms. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(2), 335-347. developed an extended R2L approach in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia using the learners' L1 as a primary resource to teach and learn science literacy in English.

⁵ Communicative language teaching (CLT), a pedagogical approach being used in Thai EFL classrooms, emphasises the use of authentic texts in language learning. This aspect is similar to R2L. However, Tieocharoen, W., & Rimkeeratikul, S. (2019). Learning strategies and teaching methods in Thai and Vietnamese universities. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume, 10*. point out that CLT does not focus on accuracy, reading, and writing. Therefore, in the case of the present study, the R2L can supplement the CLT as the former emphasises on those skills the CLT tends to neglect.

Curriculum. Hence, the repulsion of teachers deploying a genre pedagogy due to their unparalleled language teaching experiences, cultural beliefs, as pointed out by Sadeghi et al. (2013), may decrease. Moreover, R2L focuses greatly on the integration of reading and writing which suits the goal of the course in which the intervention is implemented.

METHOD

The study deployed an action research approach to develop the EFL writing skills of a group of preservice teachers in Southern Thailand. This section describes the participants, research procedures, the R2L implementation stages and activities deployed in each stage, and the data types and analyses.

Participants

Thirty (30) second year pre-service teachers, aged 20 to 23, majoring in English language teaching at the Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus were involved in the study. Pre-service teachers are tertiary students who are studying to become teachers in the future. The majority of the participants identify their mother tongue as Malay-yu, a language widely spoken in the Southernmost provinces of Thailand, Pattani, Narathiwat, and Yala (Eberhard et al., 2019). Some of them also identify Thai as their mother tongue or second language, while English is their foreign language. In terms of writing experience, the training they had in English language was minimal. Based on the participants' interviews, the writing experience they received in basic education was sentence level to paragraph level writing, and rarely a whole text – experiences reflective of the findings on writing pedagogical practices in Thailand (e.g., Geringer, 2003; Kanoksilapatham, 2014; Loan Nguyen & Suwannabubpha, 2021; Noom-Ura, 2013; Saenkhum, 2007; Toh, 2000). These experiences served as their only foundation to teaching writing. They have not experienced the R2L approach, so it is crucial for them to experience the R2L as “students”. The R2L intervention program is designed to equip them with the writing skills needed, so they can use the skills in their future careers as teachers of writing.

Procedures

The study reported in this paper was a particular part of a 1.5-year-long action research project. It is implemented under the course Learning Management in English Reading and Writing, within 15 weeks with three contact hours per week. The course was conducted online. The R2L is embedded in the course as an approach to training preservice teachers in teaching writing. The preservice teachers need to experience the R2L so that later they can implement the approach in their teaching practices.

The first level of R2L intervention implemented in the course was planning for the curriculum

program (Rose, 2020), which involves the evaluation and selection of target genres and texts demanded by the curriculum. At this stage, a linguistic needs analysis was carried out by analysing the materials and their relevance to The Thai Basic Education Core Curriculum and English language teaching materials for secondary school level at the Prince of Songkla University Demonstration School (see Mamac & Bangga, 2022). Discussion genre, the focal genre in the study, was determined as one of the target genres to be used in the program. After analysing the materials, a syllabus was developed and evaluated by two international experts who have a close familiarity with R2L implementation, and later piloted by the researchers. The syllabus was redesigned accordingly based on the outcomes of the pilot program and implemented in the actual intervention program. During the intervention, the lecturer, who is also the researcher, first asked the pre-service teachers to write a discussion text to determine the initial writing ability prior to the R2L intervention. They needed to respond to the prompt *Filters are popular in social media. Are they more advantageous or disadvantageous?* by writing a discussion text which are then collected as the pre-test data. The participants were given a week to write and submit their texts in a file via Google Classroom. After this, the R2L intervention was conducted. The selected stages of R2L will be further explained in the section below.

R2L intervention program activities

The R2L approach acknowledges the complexity of the language tasks in reading and writing. It manages this complexity by “teaching all its tasks as an integrated sequence, from whole texts to paragraphs to sentences to words, and back up again” (Rose, 2020, p. 30), based on the R2L stages of support defined and explained below:

Preparing for reading. The stage focuses on providing “background knowledge to understand its [*the text's*] (authors' emphasis) field” and a “step-by-step summary of what happens in the text” (Rose, 2020, p. 9). In the classroom, the students were shown a set of sugary foods popular in Southern Thailand. The learners identified each food and discussed how they can affect the health of people based on their own knowledge. Then, the model discussion text, written to make the issue more localised, was presented and summarised per paragraph. The prompt was *Sugar consumption is a major issue in Thailand. Should sugary food consumption be regulated or not? Discuss the negative and positive sides.*

Detailed reading. The stage involves reading the text sentence-by-sentence. It is done by preparing the learners through telling them what the sentence is about, reading the sentence, asking them questions about the sentence, and elaborating on key terms or concepts (Rose, 2020). In the classroom, the teacher

implemented the techniques in addition to Thai translations of some complex words in the elaboration of key terms.

Sentence-making/spelling. This stage is essential for learners to take control of the language in the texts. It functions to strengthen the learners' knowledge constructed in the detailed reading, to manipulate words into meaningful strings, and practice spelling (Rose, 2020). Kaur (2015) found that Thai learners find it difficult to develop a thesis statement, and from a lexicogrammatical point of view, use appropriate lexical features in writing an argumentative essay – a type of genre under the family of expository texts (Martin & Rose, 2008). Moreover, Arunsirot (2013) found some problems with Thai expository writing, specifically on Themes due to the heavy influence of the structural patterns of Thai language which the learners use directly in their English writing. To address these, the pre-service teachers need to develop their linguistic resources and knowledge about the language of discussion texts. In the classroom, the students were taught the types of clauses, identification and functions of groups and phrases, forming noun groups, and conjunctions (especially those relevant to stringing clauses to form logical argumentations).

Joint construction. Once the learners had enough knowledge about the language, joint construction was conducted, which involves the whole class (or in groups) writing another text based on the model with the teacher's guidance. Kaur (2015) found the difficulty of Thai learners to organise ideas and string them into logical and meaningful text. To address this, the teacher targeted to write a discussion text on the advantages and disadvantages of cigarette advertisements in Thailand. The lecturer grouped the preservice teachers. Each group was asked to take down notes on both sides based on their research. They collected the students' answers and organised them into a table. The lecturer reviewed the stages of discussion texts and planned which information should be included in each stage of the genre, namely, Issue, Sides, and Resolution. The learners were asked questions to engage with the writing. They take turns on writing on the board until the whole text was completed. Once finished, the whole text was reviewed again for editing its grammar structure, punctuation, and spelling.

Independent construction. This stage involves the learners' writing of the target text without the guidance of the teacher. This is where the post-intervention writing output was produced. The learners independently wrote a discussion text responding to the same prompt in the pre-test on social media filters. The same prompt was used to track the progress of the preservice teachers' writing focusing on the same field.

After the intervention, a focus group discussion was conducted in Thai language by an external

facilitator, with 12 preservice teachers – 3 males and 9 females. The Thai language is used following the suggestion of Boyce and Neale (2006) to choose the interviewers or mediators that speak the local language and train them in the data collection. The external facilitator was chosen due to the following: (1) not the teacher; never was present during the intervention, and (2) a speaker of the local language, Thai and Malay. The number of participants in the focus group was determined based on the number of pre-service teachers who volunteered to participate. Moreover, the unnecessary and repetitive data were avoided so controlling the number of participants was needed in this stage. The aim of this stage was to gather in-depth insights from the participants and understand their prior experiences with writing in the English language. An in-depth evaluation of the intervention was also focused on. Hence, conducting a focus group discussion allows the researchers to achieve the aims. Albeit the results of the focus group discussion are not the focus of this paper, the results from this stage informed the researchers regarding the participants' background, interpretation of the results, and possible areas of development exemplified in the conclusion section.

The pre- and post-intervention written outputs were evaluated and scored by an external assessor who underwent training in assessment. The R2L assessment criteria (Appendix 1) were used.

Data analysis

The data collected in the R2L implementation were analysed using a quantitative analysis for the test scores and textual analysis for the written outputs.

Quantitative analysis. The overall progress of the class was analysed based on quantitative measures. First, the pre-writing outputs of the preservice teachers were evaluated based on the R2L assessment criteria (Appendix 1). This is the pre-test scores. Based on their pre-test scores, the preservice teachers were grouped into low, middle, and high achievers using the quartile formula. To generalise the scores of each group, the pre-test scores of each preservice teacher in each group were averaged using the mean formula. To determine how the members of each group developed, the independent construction outputs were scored based on the R2L assessment criteria. This is the post-test scores. The post-test scores of the members belonging to the same group were collected and averaged.

Textual analysis. To support the overall quantitative representation of the class development, a textual analysis of the preservice teachers' texts was conducted to demonstrate their writing progress after receiving the R2L intervention. The pre-writing and post-writing outputs of one preservice teacher from the low-achievers group were chosen for demonstration in this paper. It was done because the preservice teacher showed substantial development in their writing. Since the lecturer was also the

researcher, the pre-writing and post-writing outputs were assessed by an external evaluator to avoid bias. The assessment was grounded on Rose’s (2021) R2L assessment criteria (see Appendix 1). The linguistic features before and after intervention were analysed using the SFL tools and supported by the markers’ evaluations using the R2L assessment criteria.

For discussing the qualitative data of this paper, i.e., text analysis of the pre- and post-intervention writing outputs, only the genre (represented in Appendix 1 as purpose), stages, phases, appraisal, and periodicity (represented as mode and conjunction) criteria and features are emphasised. Those are selected because their importance in developing rhetorical features for persuasion, key evaluative meanings, and organisation of arguments.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The section presents and discusses the findings of the present study. First, it compares the pre-test and the post-test scores of three pre-service teacher groups – low, middle, and high achievers – for the overall class progress. Second, the quantitative representation of the scores is supported by demonstrating how one pre-service teacher from the low achiever group developed his writing skills.

Overall progress in writing

The overall progress indicates a substantial increase in the pre-writing and post-writing average scores of the pre-service teachers in different group levels as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

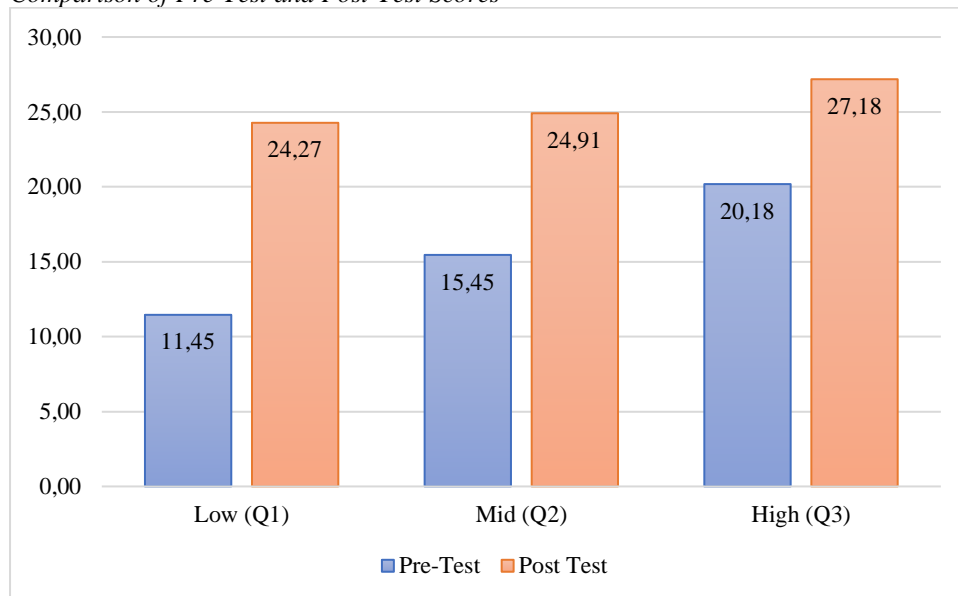


Figure 1 shows a significant difference among the pre-test scores of the three groups (blue bar). The low achievers received an average score of 11.45, whereas the mid-achievers and high achievers received 15.45 and 20.18 average scores respectively. The huge differences between the scores, represented visually by the green line, indicate the significant discrepancy in the writing skills possessed by the pre-service teachers before the intervention. Rose and Martin (2012) point out that “differences between students in their success with learning tasks indicate that some students are better prepared for the task than others” (p.10). In reflection to the focus group interview, some preservice teachers mentioned their lack of experience in writing a whole text, but some have. The differentiated experiences may have affected the level of their writing performance in the pre-intervention task. The results can be interpreted through the learners’ ZPD, which is larger for lower-achieving students than high achievers, determining the learners’ gap. The huge differences in the

learners’ ZPD are a typical outcome of the traditional and constructivist pedagogies, where the students are given tasks that are “just or beyond their independent competence” (Rose & Martin, 2012, p. 12), and progress (or not) to another level after evaluations. In other words, low achievers are given low-level tasks due to their slower pacing, whereas high achievers are given the more difficult ones due to their faster pacing. Rose and Martin (2012) point out that this widens the gap among the learners – the low achievers remain or progress slowly from their level while the high achievers are the opposite. Since the Thai education system is traditional and transitioning to the progressivist approach (Phungphol, 2005), the learners’ gap shown in the blue bars may be assumed.

The post-test scores increased significantly in all groups (orange bar). The low achievers’ average score rose to 24.27 – a 12.82-point difference from the pre-test. The mid-achievers scored 24.91 (9.46-point difference), whereas the high-achievers scored 27.18 (7-point difference). The numbers suggest that

there is a significant development in their writing skills after the intervention. Another notable feature is the decreased difference among the scores of the three groups represented graphically by the red line. The post-test score of the low-achievers is only 0.64 lower than the mid-achievers and 2.91 than the high-achievers. The results show that the ZPD of the groups were relatively neutralised. The graph indicates that the goal of the R2L has been achieved, to narrow their ZPD gap over time through continuous practice with the teacher doing the same tasks at the same difficulty level. The evidence of this achievement is shown in the preceding sections, through a linguistic analysis of the learners' outcomes.

Comparison of pre-service teachers' texts before and after R2L intervention program

This section focuses on presenting and discussing findings in relation to the development of the preservice teachers' writing ability before and after the R2L intervention program. It foregrounds a comparison in terms of how language features in texts realise meanings in context. The texts that will be discussed in this section are discussion about the use of filters in social media. Due to the space constraints, we are going to illustrate the development of writing ability by providing an example of how a lower achiever student, Willy (pseudonym), develops his writing prior to and after the intervention. The texts were selected because Willy has made a remarkable progress in terms of writing development. These will provide us evidence

on the benefits of R2L intervention program to enable students to successfully read and write. The discussion of features in the texts are organised based on the assessment criteria developed and discussed in the method section (see Appendix 1), specifically ones that are relevant to building a well-organised argumentative text such as purposes (Genre), rhetorical features for persuasion (Phases), key evaluative meanings (appraisal resources), and organisation of arguments (periodicity).

Pre-intervention text

The discussion text written by Willy at pre-intervention stage indicate a limited understanding with regards to both contextual and co-textual features of the genre. Some major problems in the text can be seen, especially to do with the irrelevant purposes of the genre being developed, the clarity of stages and phases, difficulties in controlling key evaluative meanings, and illogical transitions when presenting one argument to another. In terms of the purpose, though issue and arguments are presented in the text, it is difficult to interpret the purpose of the text. This happens primarily because the text was not planned carefully. Another factor may relate to the lack of elaborated information in the Preview of issue stage. Furthermore, the failure to provide a clear, logically related stages and phases causes Willy's text to be even more problematic – it shows that Willy struggles to organises his ideas well in the text. These problems can be seen in the excerpt of his writing provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Stages and Phases of Willy's Discussion Text at Pre-Intervention Stage (see Appendix 2)

Preview of issue	Some people argue that filters help to make a beautiful face, while others say that it masks them. I believe that the filters contribute to the advantages and disadvantages.
Side 1	On the one hand, many think that it is easier for most people to use the filter function may help us to take advantage of people...
Side 2	On the other hand, you're assuming I'm using filters. But the truth is, I don't have anything against filters, but it can be difficult to find a filter that's right for you...
?	Finally, in my opinion, the use of filters made me feel more confident, but vice versa....
Resolution?	In conclusion, while the filters many advantages and disadvantages, but people should use a social media filter each time. On the other hand, using a filter is never that person

Table 1 shows the genre analysis of the discussion text written by Willy. The organisation of the stages does not indicate the stages of a well-written discussion text, i.e., for tendering competing positions to reach a resolution (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). Before the Resolution stage, the opinion is summarised into a contrastive set of point *the use of filters made me feels confident, but vice versa*. With regards to the stages and phases, it is difficult to pin down whether this chunk of information belongs to the Resolution or not as the contrasting point is still apparent, signalled by concessive conjunction such as *but*. Ideally, the Resolution is intended to illustrate author's tendency towards one Side (Derewianka &

Jones, 2016; Martin & Rose, 2008), but the text does not exhibit this. In particular, the Resolution stage of this text exhibits unclear leaning of the author to either of the Sides. Though the text indicates that filters have many advantages and suggested people to use them in social media, an opposing point is still obvious, signalled by another contrastive conjunction *on the other hand*. The textual evidence above confirms that without the intervention, Willy seems to struggle to organise and elaborate his ideas in the text; thus, ultimately this contributes to the illogical transition of ideas and disturbing the flow of rhetoric for persuasion.

In terms of key evaluative meanings, the text does not seem to provide convincing and objective

arguments for persuading readers to align with the views on the issue being discussed. The arguments presented tend to be personal in which the attitudes are predominantly the author’s evaluations towards the benefits and drawbacks of using filters in social media. The arguments are not supported by relevant evidence, such as integrating insights from reliable sources, making the point and elaboration of the issue weak. For the argumentative genre, adding, discussing, and elaborating evidence in relation to the issue being discussed are essential to provide a strong, logical basis of the arguments delivered to the potential readers (Martin & Rose, 2008; Martin & Wodak, 2003).

Apart from the problems found in terms of staging and phasing and key evaluative meanings in the text, the organisation of ideas throughout the text

seems to be problematic. As far as the periodicity is concerned, especially that of higher-level periodicity (Martin & Rose, 2007), the text does not conform with the typical patterns in the argumentative texts. In such texts, an explicit method of development utilised via macro- and hyper-Theme⁶ is essential to provide potential readers with the overall organisation of the text. It can be said that Willy lacks adequate control over register variable mode (see assessment criteria on Appendix 1). The pre-intervention text does not scaffold the ideas well. The points provided in each paragraph are not elaborated satisfactorily and the arguments are not explicit to preview the issues to be discussed. One example of weak periodicity can be seen in the scaffolding of arguments towards the disadvantage of using filters (see the excerpt in Table 2 below).

Table 2

Willy’s Argumentation on Disadvantage of Using Filters (see Appendix 2)

Phase	Instance
<i>point exemplification</i>	On the one hand, many think that it is easier for most people to use the filter function may help us to take advantage of people. For instance, it is easy for an excellent tool to interact with people worldwide.

Table 2 shows that the text organises its point on one disadvantage of using filter function in relation to the potential of deceiving other people. From the perspective of Phase, this can be considered a hyper-Theme – theme of the paragraph – predicting how the rest of the paragraph will unfold. Having this chunk of information in a relatively prominent textual position, we would expect that the point made will be elaborated, such as by utilising relevant sources or evidence, prior to giving any relevant examples. However, there is no further elaboration justifying the disadvantage of using filter in social media in the text. Furthermore, if we look further at the global organisation of the text, its method of development is not maturely organised. Though the information provided in the Preview of issue can be considered a

macro-Theme for predicting the overall development of the text, the rest cannot be said to be anchored textually to the information in that Stage.

Post-intervention text

After the R2L intervention, Willy shows a substantial progress in terms of writing a discussion text. Compared to his first draft at the pre-intervention stage, the post-intervention text is better written in a way that it has more developed issue and arguments, organised in relevant stages, relating to the use of filters in social media. Though the phase looks slightly problematic because of the relatively vague preview and resolution of the issue, the text is well-organised, indicating Willy’s understanding on how to write a convincing discussion.

Table 3

Preview Stage (see Appendix 3 for full text)

Preview of issue	Social media is a wonderful place to be – you can connect with friends and family, be part of like-minded communities and can conduct research based on your interests. However, very often social media can be misleading, especially with the overwhelming use of filters and augmented reality. People can create their own unique personas and avatars, but with the use of heavy filters, how do you know what is real and what’s not?
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The Preview of issue the text (Table 3) includes some background information prior to specifying the issue that is going to be discussed in the text. This suggests a better control of arranging what to be delivered to his potential audiences. Looking at it from the textual point of view, the Stage offers

readers with some expectations on how the text will unfold. In other words, it plays as a macro-Theme (Martin & Rose, 2008) predicting the overall development of the text. It signals both textual and interpersonal peak of the text – foreseeing key

⁶ Following Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2007). *Working with discourse : meaning beyond the clause* (2nd ed.). Continuum. macro-Theme is a textual discourse semantic resource that functions to

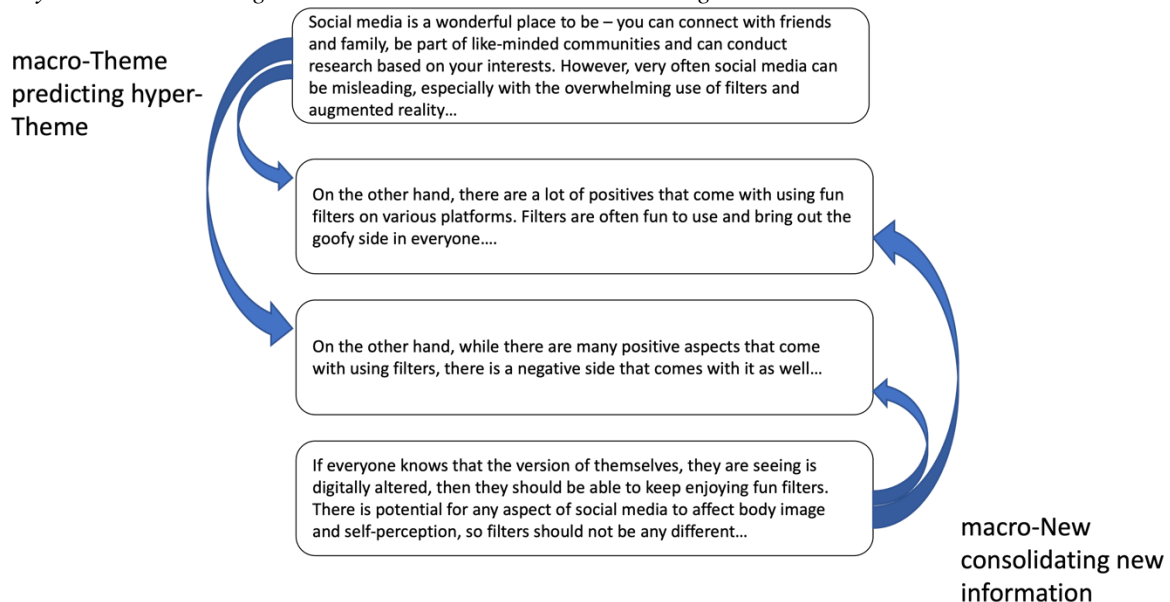
predict the overall development of the text, while hyper-Theme is the point of departure of the paragraph – topic sentence.

evaluative meanings that will colour the arguments presented.

Though considered less effective, using internal conjunctions for organising text internally, the text is more deliberate in scaffolding arguments. Two internal conjunctions, *on the other hands*, are used as a point of departure to develop the Sides. However, such a deployment of internal conjunction resources appears to be irrelevant because the ideas need to be scaffolded into two Sides: pros and cons; meanwhile both internal conjunctions used as the point of departure of the paragraph is that of contrast which

results in a less cohesive text. Following from this, the Resolution is signalled by a hypothetical condition consolidating what he has been through in the Sides. Rather than indicating the move via other internal conjunctions (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Martin & Rose, 2008), such as *finally*, *in conclusion*, or *to sum up*, the hypothetical condition can lead to the unclarity of Resolution. The side to which the author supports is implicitly expressed at Resolution. The development of Willy's control over Stages and Mode in his writing at post-intervention stage can be illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2
Willy's Control over Stages and Mode in Post-Intervention Writing



After elaborating the way information is organised across Stages, the paper turns its attention into the discussion of key evaluative meanings post-intervention text. With regards to the key evaluative meanings, Willy has developed a more comprehensive use of Appraisal, including attitudinal and engagement resources (Martin & White, 2005) which are crucial for the success of the discussion text. It can be seen that the text has modality resources used for tempering the evaluation towards the issue, such as *social media can be misleading*, *These fun features can make an otherwise lifeless photo really come to life*, and *The availability and ease of filters can create an obsession with your own image as well as others*. By modality, the text opens a space for negotiation on his evaluations towards the benefits and drawbacks of using filters in social media. In other words, the text becomes more heteroglossic – conforming to the typical features of argumentative genres (see also Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Dreyfus et al., 2016; Humphrey, 2016). Other instances of the heteroglossic nature of the text can be seen from the use of projection for achieving a sense of objectivity by attributing the evaluation to someone else and concessive resources, especially

internal conjunctions to show contrast, such as *If everyone knows that the version of themselves, they are seeing is digitally altered, then they should be able to keep enjoying fun filters*. These projection resources, realised via mental processes, source the evaluation to other entities rather than the authors, e.g., everyone and they, which can be seen as an effort to relate the issue being discussed to the potential audiences' experiences – affiliating tenor relationship (Martin, 2010).

CONCLUSION

The paper has reported a study aiming to develop Thai pre-service teachers' skills in writing discussion texts and exploring the benefits of R2L intervention program in terms of equipping the pre-service teachers with the knowledge of language in context. The paper expounds that the pre-service teachers writing skill gap was relatively neutralised after the intervention, evident in the comparison of their pre-test and post-test scores (cf. Figure 1). The overall development of writing ability was demonstrated through a quantitative analysis whereby we found that the pre-service teachers tend to achieve a better

control of their ability in writing, i.e., discussion texts. To further illustrate this point, a comparison of the pre- and post-intervention writing outputs of Willy, a preservice teacher belonging to the low achiever group making outstanding progress in terms of writing development was provided. Based on the genre and linguistic analysis of Willy's written outputs, it was found that the pre-service teacher developed his control of the features of the discussion genre especially the stages, phases, appraisal resources, and mode which are crucial to establish a well, logical discussion text (cf. Table 1, 2, 3, and Figure 2). These higher-level features of the language affected the control of the overall linguistic features of the post-R2L discussion text. Based on these results, the potential of the R2L approach to address the development of EFL writing can be inferred.

Despite the successful results, some limitations of the study need to be acknowledged and some aspects of the action research can still be improved. First, since the intervention was conducted online, it was difficult to determine the outcome of the intervention in a face-to-face mode. Nevertheless, the study can serve as a helpful resource to those who can only do the intervention online. Second, further research on developing a contextualised and condensed lesson plan based on local institutional standards should be done to appropriate the approach into the Thai educational system and its bureaucratic practices. Third, since the Thai education ministry supports and promotes the student-centred or progressive learning, integrating active learning activities such as games can further reduce the resistance in the use of R2L. Lastly, the present research was a small-scale project though it should be noted that the quantitative result of the study (cf. Figure 1) follows the similar trends of those R2L action research studies in larger settings and longer timelines (e.g., see Rose & Martin [2013] for a report on a large scale R2L program in Western Australia). This means that the present study is still evident to depict the students' writing development and over time it can be a foundational resource for a larger and longer scale uptake of the study within or outside of Thailand.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. R2L Rubric

The rubric was used based on the scoring system described in Rose (2020, p.1):

If a student’s writing meets a criterion of the highest level expected for her school stage, it will score 3. If there is no evidence of that criterion, it will score 0. If there is evidence but it is weak, it will score 1. If it is stronger but not at the top standard for the stage, it will score 2. So, the maximum possible total score for a piece of writing is 42.

Assessment criteria and descriptions (adapted from Rose, 2020)

	Criteria	Description
genre	Purpose	Is the discussion genre appropriate for the writer’s purpose?
	Stages	Does it go through appropriate stages for the genre? (Issue, Sides, Resolution)
	Phases	Are there appropriate phases of description, preview of sides, examples, evidence, explanation, conclusions?
register	Field	Does it describe the issue, context, points of view coherently?
	Tenor	Are the arguments both convincing and objective?
	Mode	Is there an appropriate level of descriptive and persuasive resources?
discourse semantics	Lexis	Are the lexical choices used coherently to describe the issue, contexts, and sides?
	Appraisal	Is there a range of appraisals used to evaluate issues and sides, and to source attitudes?
	Conjunction	Are logical relations used to construct arguments with internal contrast, consequence, time?
lexicogrammar	Reference	Is it clear who is referred to?
	Grammar	Are the grammatical conventions of written English used accurately? Is there an appropriate variety of sentence and word group structures for the school stage, or is it too simple?
graphology	Spelling	How accurately spelt are core words and non-core words?
	Punctuation	How appropriately and accurately is punctuation used?
	Presentation	Are paragraphs used? How legible is the writing? Is the layout clear?

Appendix 2. Willy’s discussion text at pre-intervention stage

Some people argue that filters help to make a beautiful face, while others say that it masks them. I believe that the filters contribute to the advantages and disadvantages.

On the one hand, many think that it is easier for most people to use the filter function may help us to take advantage of people. For instance, it is easy for an excellent tool to interact with people worldwide.

On the other hand, you're assuming I'm using filters. But the truth is, I don't have anything against filters, but it can be difficult to find a filter that's right for you. As hard as I tried in the beginning, there just wasn't a filter out there that seemed like "me" and filters take away some of your creative control.

Finally, in my opinion, the use of filters made me feel more confident, but vice versa. If we speak to a guy on social media and we meet. It may make us insecure about meeting each other and possibly deceive him.

In conclusion, while the filters many advantages and disadvantages, but people should use a social media filter each time. On the other hand, using a filter is never that person.

Appendix 3. Willy’s discussion text at post-intervention stage

Using filters in social media is very common nowadays. Are filters more helpful or not? Explain the advantages and disadvantages.

Social media is a wonderful place to be – you can connect with friends and family, be part of like-minded communities and can conduct research based on your interests. However, very often social media can be misleading, especially with the overwhelming use of filters and augmented reality. People can create their own unique personas and avatars, but with the use of heavy filters, how do you know what is real and what’s not?

On the other hand, there are a lot of positives that come with using fun filters on various platforms. Filters are often fun to use and bring out the goofy side in everyone. Take, for example, Instagram’s interactive filters

that can include anything from moving hearts to added eye makeup. These fun features can make an otherwise lifeless photo really come to life. Filters give people the creative tools to craft authentic and unique posts that can ultimately increase their following. Additionally, using fun filters can make you feel more confident and allow you to share things that you otherwise may not have. Users can experiment with fun things like hair and other features by using popular apps like Snapchat and Instagram.

On the other hand, while there are many positive aspects that come with using filters, there is a negative side that comes with it as well. Most filters are used through social media platforms, and social media usage has been linked to depression, anxiety, and body-image issues. Filters often portray an altered version of someone, and it can be hard not to compare ourselves to the filtered versions of our peers. Filters allow you to snap a picture anywhere in the world at any time and appear as if you have a perfect tan, amazing skin, and much more. Manipulating our images has become such a normal part of society that it can be hard to imagine a life without doggy ears, crowns, and heart-eyes. The availability and ease of filters can create an obsession with your own image as well as others.

If everyone knows that the version of themselves, they are seeing is digitally altered, then they should be able to keep enjoying fun filters. There is potential for any aspect of social media to affect body image and self-perception, so filters should not be any different. It's hard to imagine a world without filters, and we shouldn't have to. Apps like Instagram and Snapchat have made taking pictures fun and allow us to experiment with things like hair color and makeup at the click of a button. The next time you go to snap a great selfie, add a fun filter, and just keep in mind that what you're seeing isn't the real version, but is still OK to use!