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# Enhancing English writing competence in higher education: a comparative study of teacher-only assessment versus teacher and student self-assessment approaches

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## Abstract

Despite the critical role of academic English writing proficiency in higher education, existing research has inadequately addressed the comparative impact of teacher-led and student-involved assessments on writing outcomes. To address the research gap, this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of 'Teacher-Only Assessment' compared to 'Combined Teacher and Student Self-Assessment' in English writing at a university in southern Thailand. Additionally, the study examined the viewpoints of students regarding the implementation of these approaches. It utilized a sequential explanatory research design in conjunction with a quasi-experimental design. The research instruments included a series of writing tasks, a teacher assessment rubric, a self-assessment form, and a questionnaire with open-ended questions. A group of 62 first-year English majors was divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group, consisting of 31 students each. Both groups were taking an English Composition I course for 12 weeks and were assigned the same writing tasks. The experimental group was provided with both self-assessments and teacher evaluations, whereas the control group solely received teacher evaluations. The quantitative data was analyzed using an independent sample, while the qualitative data was examined through a thematic analysis. Quantitatively, the independent t-test results indicated that there was no statistically significant distinction in overall writing performance between both groups, except for narrative paragraphs. Moreover, the qualitative findings emphasized the merits of incorporating teacher-led and student-involved assessments. This study suggests various implications for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction and assessment practices.

**Keywords:** English learning, Self-assessment, Teacher assessment, Thai students, Writing

## Introduction

In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, proficient writing skills are essential for overall language mastery (Kellogg, 2008). Effective writing enables students to articulate their thoughts, ideas, and accumulated knowledge cogently (Flower &

Hayes, 2004; Hyland, 2015). Therefore, the evaluation methods employed to gauge EFL students' writing abilities are crucial indicators of their linguistic development (Collin & Quigley, 2021; Elander et al., 2006). Evaluation is a systematic process intended to ascertain the degree to which teachers have effectively and suitably carried out the processes of teaching and learning. This entails carefully examining whether different elements, such as indicators, instructional materials, learning strategies and media, assessment methods, and test items, are in perfect alignment with the specified competencies, adequately address the needs of learners, and are appropriate for the learning context (Gultom, 2016). On the other hand, assessment, as defined by Brown (2004), is a continuous and thorough process that includes a wider range of educational activities. It is crucial to acknowledge that evaluation has a broader scope, while assessment plays a vital role within the overall framework of evaluation.

Historically, teacher assessments have been the primary mechanism for evaluating writing proficiency, and their impact on student writing outcomes has been well-documented (Al-Wossabi, 2019; Van Beuningen et al., 2012). Recent scholarship, however, has broadened its scope to examine alternative assessment strategies, including peer and self-assessments. For example, Ganji (2009) posits that peer assessment can be more effective than teacher assessment under certain conditions. Additional studies indicate that trained peer reviewers may offer semantically richer feedback compared to teachers (Cui et al., 2022). Concurrently, there is an increasing body of evidence supporting the efficacy of both peer and self-assessment strategies in influencing writing performance (Cahyono & Rosyida, 2016; Lu et al., 2021). Moreover, contemporary research advocates for the inclusion of self-assessment, citing various pedagogical advantages (Alkhowarizmi & Hamdani, 2022; Mazloomi & Khabiri, 2018; Ratminingsih et al., 2018), and teachers have generally shown a positive disposition towards student self-assessment (Fahimi & Rahimi, 2015).

Despite these advancements, there remains a conspicuous gap in the literature concerning a direct comparison between teacher-only and teacher-student assessment approaches, particularly within the Thai EFL context. The scarcity of comparative studies creates an urgent need for further investigation to establish which assessment methodology is more effective in enhancing writing competence. Understanding the differential impacts of teacher-only and teacher-student assessment strategies on EFL writing proficiency has significant implications for both pedagogical practice and assessment design. Discovering a more effective approach may allow teachers to refine their instructional strategies, improving the quality of EFL writing education. Furthermore, an in-depth examination of these assessment mechanisms can provide valuable insights into students' metacognitive processes, thereby encouraging autonomous learning and the development of critical thinking skills.

## **Literature review**

### **Teacher assessment and writing achievement**

In both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) instructional context, teacher assessment and feedback represent the prevailing paradigm. Differing viewpoints exist regarding the advantages intrinsic to teacher assessment and feedback in the context of students' writing proficiency. Multiple scholarly

investigations have delved into the ramifications of teacher-provided feedback on students' educational achievements, consistently confirming its salubrious impact on the caliber of writing and linguistic competence (Patra et al., 2022; Van Beuningen et al., 2012). Encouragingly, students themselves have exhibited a favorable disposition towards the invaluable feedback proffered by their teachers (Al-Wossabi, 2019; Maas, 2017; Waluyo & Rofiah, 2021).

Nevertheless, it is essential to note the insightful perspective of Cui et al., (2022), who argue that the process of furnishing feedback on written assignments, while undoubtedly valuable, can also pose a formidable challenge, particularly in the context of large classes or multiple smaller sections. Under such prevalent scenarios, teachers often find it nearly impossible to provide meticulous commentary to every student (Nguyen, 2021). The resultant outcome might be hastily generated feedback, sometimes lacking in explanatory elements, which can inadvertently lead to a passive utilization of such feedback, thereby diminishing its potential educational efficacy (Ho, 2020; Lee, 2007; Zhao, 2010). Similarly, Lee and Coniam (2013) have shed light on the limitations teachers face when assessing EFL writing proficiency, adding another layer of complexity to the issue.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the higher education community has dedicated significant attention to the concept of self-assessment as both an alternative and a complementary strategy to teacher-generated feedback. Research has consistently shown that self-assessment not only enhances students' writing performance but also nurtures their sense of autonomy and proactive engagement in the learning process (Apridayani & Thoch, 2023; Ratminingsih et al., 2018) and increases their self-efficacy in writing (Chung et al., 2021). The utilization of self-assessment as a pedagogical tool offers an avenue for students to take more ownership of their learning journey, fostering a sense of responsibility and self-efficacy that goes beyond the confines of traditional teacher-led assessments. In this way, the ongoing discourse surrounding the role of teacher assessment and feedback in ESL and EFL instruction continues to evolve, with self-assessment emerging as a promising approach to complement the established practices.

### **Student self-assessment and writing achievement**

Self-assessment is frequently conceptualized as a personalized, unguided introspection of performance with the primary objective of producing an autonomously derived synopsis of one's own proficiency in a specific domain (Andrade, 2019). It falls within the purview of formative assessment, wherein students engage in critical self-reflection and evaluation of the quality of their work and learning experiences. During this process, they assess the extent to which they have aligned with explicitly articulated objectives or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their endeavors, and subsequently enact revisions (Andrade & Du, 2007). This method constitutes a strategy for self-reflection on linguistic errors, nonlinguistic aspects such as discourse organization, and stylistic choices made by language learners. These areas are recognized as facets requiring enhancement throughout the course of their learning journey (Ratminingsih et al., 2018).

Self-assessment transcends the confines of mere evaluation; it is a potent pedagogical tool rooted in the realm of metacognition. This approach derives from the premise that learning extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge from an expert to a

novice. Instead, it points out the dynamic cognitive process that unfolds when individuals engage with novel ideas (Pantiwati & Husamah, 2017). The process of self-assessment is intrinsically intertwined with self-regulated learning (SRL), serving as important constituents, encompassing goal setting and monitoring as well as metacognitive processes. Empirical investigations into SRL unequivocally affirm that self-generated feedback pertaining to one's learning approach correlates positively with academic advancement (Apridayani, 2022; Apridayani & Teo, 2021; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011).

A plethora of scholarly investigations have delved into the multifaceted realm of self-assessment and its ramifications for students' writing prowess. For instance, the empirical inquiry conducted by Fahimi and Rahimi (2015) painstakingly scrutinized the profound impact of self-assessment pedagogical interventions on the burgeoning composition skills of Iranian students. The empirical results meticulously unveiled a progressive enhancement in the students' writing acumen, thereby elucidating a robust correlation between self-assessment practices and scholastic achievement. Noteworthy is the palpable convergence of insights, as corroborated by the scholarly endeavors of Mazloomi and Khabiri (2018). Their research underscored the less daunting and stress-inducing nature of self-assessment compared to traditional teacher-driven evaluation methodologies. Furthermore, this holistic perspective promulgated a heightened sense of accountability among students, thereby engendering a deeper commitment to their own linguistic development. Within the Indonesian educational milieu, Ratminingsih et al. (2018) proffer a compelling proposition, advocating for the judicious deployment of self-assessment paradigms as a pivotal catalyst for bolstering students' autonomy and the refinement of their compositional competencies. The latest study by Alkhowarizmi and Hamdani (2022) also confirmed that the self-assessment technique had a significant effect on students' achievement in writing narrative text. These scholarly elucidations collectively indicate the salient import of integrating self-assessment as a pedagogical tool to foster academic excellence and nurture self-reliant learners.

### **The research gap**

Numerous comprehensive investigations have been undertaken in various educational settings, delving deep into the intricate realms of teacher assessment, student self-assessment, and their profound impact on writing achievement. One such noteworthy exploration by Baleghizadeh and Hajizadeh (2014) unveiled compelling evidence that substantiated a remarkable correlation between the assessments conducted by teachers and those conducted by students themselves. In the process, it became abundantly clear that self-assessment transcended its role as a mere evaluative tool and emerged as a dynamic instrument fostering the nurturing of writing skills among learners, thus catalyzing their academic growth.

Further enriching this narrative, Ganji (2009) highlighted a significant disparity between the writing performances of groups subjected to traditional teacher assessments and those embracing self-assessment techniques. The results unequivocally underscored the heightened efficacy of self-assessment, which emerged as a potent catalyst for writing proficiency development. These findings, albeit persuasive, constituted only a fraction of the multifaceted discourse surrounding assessment methodologies. Contrary to the prevailing consensus, a recent study by Movahedi and Aghajanzadeh

(2021) challenged the existing paradigm by presenting intriguing data. Their findings indicated that, in the context of Iranian intermediate EFL learners, teacher assessments consistently outperformed self-assessment techniques. This divergence in outcomes, though provocative, only serves to deepen the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding the multifarious dimensions of assessment strategies and their nuanced effects on writing achievement.

It becomes increasingly evident that teacher assessment, student self-assessment, and their symbiotic relationship with writing achievement stand as essential areas deserving of sustained exploration and analysis. But, despite the growing body of knowledge that has been gathered over the years, there is still a noticeable gap in the literature: there are no large-scale studies that compare the results of teacher-only assessments and teacher-student assessments, especially in the unique Thai EFL context. This stark research gap casts a shadow of uncertainty over the nuanced dynamics at play within these critical pedagogical domains. The need for immediate scholarly attention is undeniable, as a thorough and robust exploration of this uncharted territory promises to illuminate hitherto concealed facets of the education landscape, ultimately reshaping our understanding and refining our approaches to cultivating proficient writers in the diverse world of English language learning. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teacher assessment and combined teacher-student assessment compare in terms of their impact on Thai EFL students' writing competence?
2. How do Thai EFL students perceive and value combined teacher-student assessment in their writing development?

## Methodology

A sequential explanatory research design was utilized in this study, along with a quasi-experimental design. According to Creswell and Clark (2007), a sequential explanatory design is a rigorous research methodology that amalgamates both quantitative and qualitative modes of data collection and analysis within a single research cycle. This methodological choice affords a nuanced examination of the research questions by capturing quantitative metrics and supplementing them with qualitative context. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to enhance the interpretive depth of quantitative findings through the inclusion of qualitative insights, facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter (Ivankova et al., 2006). Furthermore, this study employed a quasi-experimental design to compare the effects of teacher-only assessment and combined teacher-student self-assessment on students' writing performance. It is a type of experimental research in which the purpose is to establish a link between dependent and independent variables (Rogers & Revesz, 2019). It enables researchers to conduct research interventions in two separate groups: control and experimental, as in this study.

## Participants

This study involved 62 first-year English major students at one university in southern Thailand. They were aged between 17 and 19. Their English proficiency ranged from A1 to B1 levels. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for

Languages (CEFR), students in these levels are classified as basic to independent users, or beginner to intermediate English levels. A purposive sampling method was used to recruit the students. The method emphasizes the selection of research participants based on specific questions and purposes of the study, as well as available information about the participants of the study (Campbell et al., 2020). Thus, the selection criteria for this study included: (1) they were first-year students; (2) they were English majors; and (3) they enrolled in an English writing course. In addition, the researchers utilized a convenient method to determine the student distribution in both the control and experimental groups, which aligned with the class distribution at the university. Students from two sections participated in this study. One class served as the experimental class ( $N=31$ ), and the other served as the control class ( $N=31$ ).

### Research instruments

#### Writing tasks

To assess students' English-writing abilities, they were provided with paragraph writing assignments such as definition paragraphs, process paragraphs, opinion paragraphs, and narrative paragraphs. Each task provided students with two topics, and they could choose one of the topics for their writing. The topics of each type of paragraph are presented in Table 1.

This study collected scores on students' writing assignments before and after treatments were applied. Examples of students' work are shown in Fig. 1.

#### Teacher assessment rubric and student self-assessment form

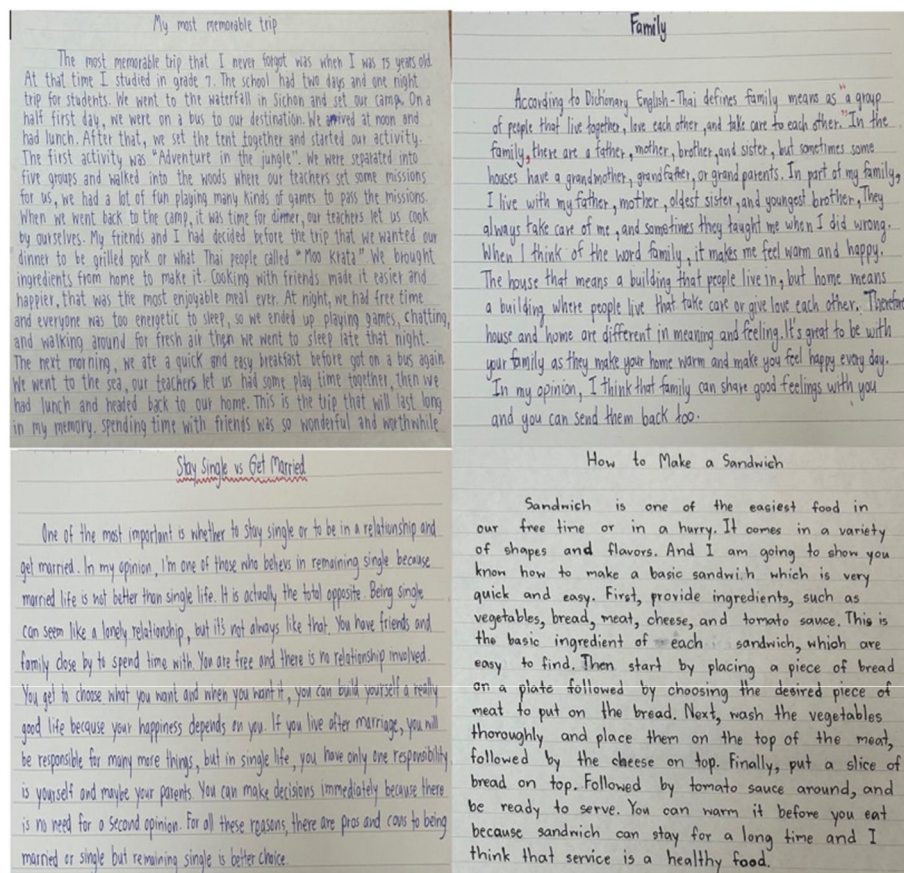
Teachers used a rubric, as described in Table 2 and 3, to grade students' writing that consisted of several components to evaluate, including organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. The rubric was formulated by the course coordinator and verified by two proficient English writing teachers. The total raw score for each writing assignment was 100. Two-course teachers marked the writing tasks separately, and the scores obtained from the two were averaged to indicate the students' writing achievement scores.

In addition, this study developed a self-evaluation form for students in the experimental group to evaluate their own writing. They were asked to rate and evaluate their writing in a variety of categories, as illustrated in Fig. 2.

**Table 1** The topics for the writing tasks

No.	Type of paragraph	Topics
1	Definition paragraph	Friendship Family
2	Process paragraph	How to make a sandwich How to withdraw money from an ATM
3	Opinion paragraph	Staying single or getting married Online learning vs. onsite learning
4	Narrative paragraph	My first day at the university My most memorable trip





**Fig. 1** Students' writing

**Table 2** Teacher assessment rubric

No.	Assessment components	Grade proportion
1	Organization (structure and features of a paragraph)	30
2	Content (ideas, clarity, coherence)	20
3	Grammar (correct grammatical features)	20
4	Vocabulary (word use)	20
5	Mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, spelling)	10
	Total	100

### Questionnaire

A questionnaire with seven open-ended questions, as shown in Table 4, was used in this study to investigate students' perceptions of combined teacher-student assessment to improve their English writing. The questions were developed based on the objectives of the study. To ensure that students understood each question and that accurate data was obtained, the questions were translated into Thai. Two native Thai teachers with experience teaching English writing courses verified the validity of the questions, and they were subjected to a pilot phase involving a group of students who

**Table 3** Specific writing assessment criteria

Aspect	Level	Criteria
Organization (Structure and features of a paragraph)		
Topic sentence	10–8	Complete, interesting, strong, and clearly states the main idea with a specific controlling idea
	7–6	Complete and adequately states the main idea
	5–4	Complete, but the main idea is not entirely clear
	3–0	Incomplete or does not state the main idea
Supporting details	10–8	The main idea is fully developed using enough and specific supporting and details sentences that relate to the topic sentence
	7–6	The main idea is somewhat developed using mostly specific details
	5–4	The main idea is supported with general or limited details. A few are vague/missing/unrelated
	3–0	Few detail sentences to support the main idea. Insufficient, vague, or undeveloped examples
Concluding sentence	10–8	Complete and clearly sums up the paragraph or restates the main idea effectively. Interesting conclusion
	7–6	Complete and adequately sums up the paragraph. Good conclusion but repeats same pattern of topic sentence
	5–4	Complete, but does not sum up the paragraph or too vague
	3–0	Incomplete and does not sum up the paragraph. No logical concluding sentence that connects to a main idea
Content (Ideas, clarity, coherence)	20–16	Excellent: Every sentence makes complete logical sense. Ideas flow in the paragraph and clearly support the main idea, creating clear meaning. Consistent focus on topic
	15–11	Good: One to three sentences need work. Ideas in the paragraph support the main idea, but could be organized more clearly
	10–6	Fair: The meaning of half of the sentences is unclear. Some ideas in the paragraph do not support the main idea or are out of place, causing a confusion of meaning
	5–0	Poor: Needs extensive work, re-plan and re-do. Ideas in the paragraph are disorganized and do not support the main idea. Unrelated details, unclear or incomplete
Grammar (Correct grammatical features)	20–16	Excellent: Perfect or almost perfect. All sentences are complete and effective; complex sentences are used; no grammatical errors
	15–11	Good: Few minor errors. Sentences are complete; simple and complex sentences are used; few grammatical errors
	10–6	Fair: Several minor errors. Some sentences are incomplete or run-on; simple sentences are used; some grammatical errors
	5–0	Poor: Several errors, including major errors. Most sentences are incomplete, choppy or run-on; grammatical errors affect readability



Table 3 (continued)

Aspect	Level	Criteria
Vocabulary (Word use)	20–16	Excellent: Perfect, includes some higher vocabulary. All words are used appropriately; there is evidence of some new vocabulary being used. Precise word choice
	15–11	Good: Some errors, and does not include higher vocabulary. Words are used appropriately. Some good vocabulary, but there are a few repetitions in vocabulary
	10–6	Fair: Many errors Words are basic; some words are used in the wrong context. Lots of repetition in vocabulary
	5–0	Poor: Many errors, and meaning is not always clear. Some inappropriate vocabulary is used; some words are used incorrectly or in the wrong context. Poor word choice. Limited new vocabulary
Mechanics (Capitalization, punctuation, spelling)	10–8	Excellent: There are no errors in spelling, capitalization, and/ or punctuation
	7–6	Good: There are only a few errors, but none major, in spelling, capitalization, and/or punctuation. (2–3)
	5–4	Fair: There are some errors in spelling, capitalization, and/or punctuation. (4–5)
	3–0	Poor: There are many errors in spelling, capitalization, and/or punctuation. (more than 5)

SELF-REVIEW FORM

Type of paragraph:

1. What is the topic of the paragraph?
2. Does your paragraph have a topic sentence?  
Yes ☐ No ☐  
If yes, write your topic sentence.
3. Do all your sentences in the paragraph relate to the topic sentence?  
☐ Yes ☐ No  
If no, write the unrelated sentence(s).
4. Does your paragraph have a concluding sentence? Yes ☐ No ☐  
If yes, write your concluding sentence.
5. Do you think that your paragraph contains mistakes or errors in terms of vocabulary, spelling, grammar, or mechanics (capitalization and punctuation)?

If yes, please identify your mistakes or errors by completing the table below.

Aspects	Mistakes/errors
Vocabulary and spelling	
Grammar	
Mechanics (capitalization and punctuation)	

6. What do you like best about your paragraph?
7. Please rate your writing.

☐ Poor (1)  
☐ Fair (2)

☐ Fairly good (3)  
☐ Good (4)

☐ Very good (5)

Fig. 2 Student self-assessment form

**Table 4** Open-ended questions

No	Questions
1	What do you think about your English writing skills before taking this course?
2	What problems do you have with English writing?
3	What are your thoughts on the features of a good paragraph and the paragraph writing process?
4	What did you think when your teacher asked you to evaluate your writing?
5	What did you think about your teacher’s feedback on your writing?
6	Do you think self-review and teacher review improve your writing? Please explain your reasons
7	What do you think about your English writing skills after taking this course?

were not included in the research sample. This pilot aimed to assess the clarity of the questions in terms of the students’ comprehension.

**Data collection procedure**

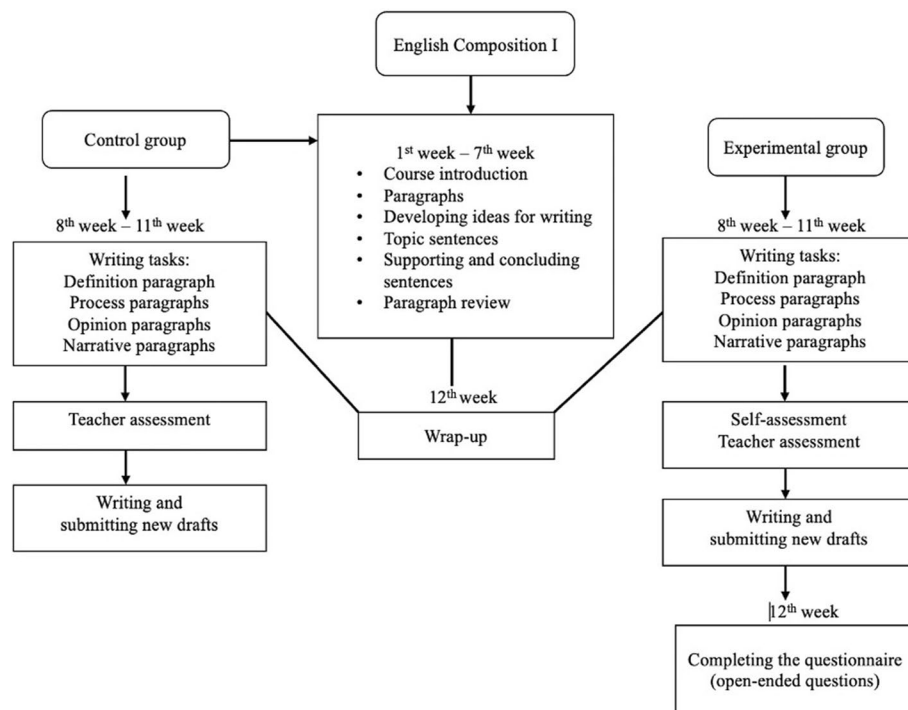
The students were taking an English writing course, namely English Composition I, for 12 weeks. In this course, they learned the components and organization of different types of paragraphs. At the end of the course, it was expected that they would be able to produce well-organized and effective paragraphs in different genres. Two sections participated in this study. The students were taught by two different teachers. Both teachers possess over five years of experience teaching English and have obtained certification as Fellows of the Higher Education Academy in the United Kingdom (UKPSF). The course coordinator prepared the course syllabus and learning materials that were discussed and approved by the School Board Committee before the semester started. The course syllabus included the course description, teaching method and materials, lesson plan, learning sources, and assessment method. The teachers followed the guidance that was arranged by the course coordinator, and they agreed to take part in this research project.

The course started with the course introduction. From the second to the seventh meeting, the lesson topics were about paragraphs, developing ideas for writing, topic sentences, supporting and concluding sentences, and paragraph review. The types of paragraphs were discussed and assigned from the eighth to the eleventh week. In this study, both control and experimental groups were assigned the same writing tasks. They wrote four types of paragraphs in different meetings, including definition paragraphs, process paragraphs, opinion paragraphs, and narrative paragraphs. One paragraph comprised 150–200 words, and they were supposed to finish each paragraph in 30 min. All students submitted their first writing draft before the different treatments were implemented in both groups. After the submission, the experimental group was subjected to a dual-layer assessment process. Students first engaged in self-evaluation of their writing, after which the instructor provided a formal assessment and feedback. In contrast, the control group underwent a traditional teacher-only assessment, foregoing the self-assessment component. Both groups were then required to write and submit a new version of their work in the same week. The scores of their first and new drafts from both groups were then compared to determine the impact of the various treatments they received. Furthermore, in the final week of the writing course, a questionnaire was distributed to the students in the experimental group to investigate their perceptions

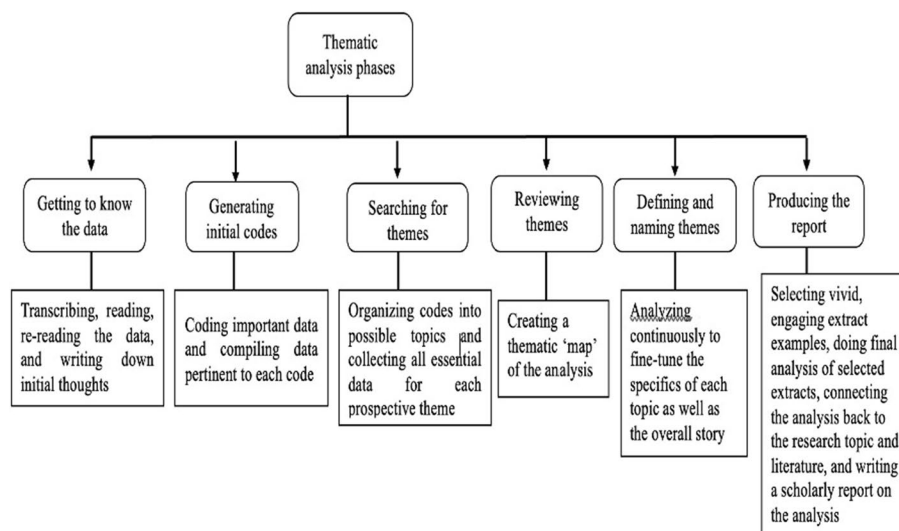
of combined teacher-student assessment in their writing development. Only ten of the 31 students in the experimental group agreed to fill out the questionnaire, which is still considered an acceptable number for the qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). To participate in this study, they signed a consent form. The questionnaire was distributed using a Google Form. It took about 15–20 min to complete the questionnaire. The data collection procedure is described in Fig. 3.

### Data analysis

After data collection, a rigorous statistical analysis was conducted. An independent sample t-test was utilized to assess and compare the writing outcomes between the experimental and control groups. It is essential to emphasize that the significance threshold for the t-test was set at  $p < 0.0125$ . This stringent criterion was adopted to mitigate the risk of type 1 errors that may arise due to multiple comparisons. Moreover, the responses of students to their perspectives and learning experiences with the self-assessment and teacher assessment were analyzed using the thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting data patterns. The themes were created using the literature and research questions as a foundation. The researcher employed a deductive approach to code and analyze data by applying a series of concepts, ideas, or topics. The researcher lays the groundwork for data analysis by investigating how meanings are coded and arranged to generate themes (Braun et al., 2015; Waluyo & Apridayani, 2021). The thematic analysis phases are illustrated in Fig. 4.



**Fig. 3** Data collection procedure



**Fig. 4** Thematic analysis phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

**Table 5** The independent sample t-test results

	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> value
Definition paragraph	1.243	60	.219
Process paragraph	-.814	60	.419
Opinion paragraph	1.159	60	.251
Narrative paragraph	2.636	60	.011
Overall	1.372	60	.175

## Results

### The effects of teacher assessment and combined teacher-student assessment on students' writing outcomes

The results of the independent sample t-test revealed that overall, there was no statistically significant difference in the writing performance of students between the experimental and control groups. Regarding the specific writing of paragraphs, encompassing definition, process, and opinion paragraphs, the findings similarly indicated that there was no statistically significant disparity observed between the two groups. Nevertheless, there was a notable difference in the case of the narrative paragraph. Table 5 shows the results of the independent sample t-test analysis.

### Students' perspectives

The present study thoroughly explored students' perceptions of the use of combined teacher-student assessment in their writing progress through the utilization of a series of seven open-ended questions. It gathered 2,210 words from the students' responses. Thematic analysis was meticulously applied to the responses, yielding a set of insightful findings that shed light on the variety of their views and experiences. Students were identified by the letter S, followed by a series of numbers, such as S1, S2, and so

on. The investigation commenced by examining the perspectives of students regarding their writing proficiency, challenges encountered in writing, and comprehension of the structure of paragraph composition.

Based on the collected responses, it became apparent that Thai EFL students held apprehensions regarding their proficiency in English writing. The individuals expressed a lack of confidence in their writing abilities and acknowledged the need for substantial improvement.

*"I'm not particularly skilled at writing because it's a difficult skill to master (S2)." "I have poor English writing skills. I can hardly write (S3)." "It must be extremely difficult because I'm also not very good at Thai writing (S5)." "I believe I need to improve my English writing skills significantly (S7)."*

When asked about their problems with English writing, the students admitted to a variety of obstacles. Grammar and vocabulary usage were the most problematic, followed by mechanics and native language interference issues.

#### **Problem 1: grammar**

Students often struggle with the complex rules of English grammar. English has a rigid sentence structure and extensive use of tenses, which can be confusing. Students may find it difficult to correctly use articles, prepositions, and verb tenses. For example, they might mix up the past and present perfect tenses or use incorrect prepositions in phrases.

*"My own writing frequently exhibits a multitude of grammatical errors that significantly impact the overall quality of my work (S1, S4, S8, S9)." "I encounter difficulties in applying English tenses properly (S3)."*

#### **Problem 2: vocabulary use**

Vocabulary is another major hurdle. Some students may have a limited range of vocabulary. The nuances of English vocabulary, such as the distinctions between synonyms or the context-specificity of certain words, can be particularly tricky.

*"Frequently, I encounter challenges with my vocabulary accuracy (S2)." "When I write a paragraph or an essay in English, I'm not sure if I have used appropriate vocabulary (S6, S10)."*

#### **Problem 3: mechanics**

Writing mechanics, including punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure, pose another set of problems. Misuse of punctuation can lead to run-on sentences or sentence fragments, disrupting the flow and clarity of their writing.

*"The utilization of mechanics, encompassing punctuation marks and capitalization, may appear to be easy; however, on occasion, I inadvertently neglect to incorporate periods or commas within my sentences, resulting in unclear ideas or misinterpretations (S4)."*

**Problem 4: native language interference**

The influence of students' native language, such as Thai, is a notable concern. This interference may manifest in various manners, including direct translation, resulting in English constructions that are unnatural or incorrect. The sentence structure and rhetorical style in Thai differ from those in English, which may lead students to unintentionally transfer Thai patterns to their English writing.

*"I generate ideas in the Thai language. I compose my sentences employing Thai stylistic conventions. Then I realized that my writing was erroneous (S5)." "When composing a paragraph in English, I employ a similar approach as when constructing a paragraph in Thai. I perform direct translations of words from the Thai language to English. It causes mistakes and unclear ideas in my writing (S6)."*

Despite their apparent difficulties, the students revealed a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of the paragraph-writing process. They recognized that crafting a well-structured piece of writing necessitated a series of sequential steps. These steps encompassed selecting an appropriate topic, generating coherent ideas, and organizing these ideas in alignment with paragraph structure principles. In addition, they acknowledged the importance of maintaining thematic consistency between supporting sentences and the topic sentence, culminating in a logically sound conclusion.

Furthermore, this study unearthed intriguing insights into students' perspectives towards self-assessment. Several themes from the students' responses emerged. While the act of evaluating their own writing occasionally evoked a sense of embarrassment, they universally acknowledged its intrinsic value.

**Self-consciousness and lack of confidence**

This theme reflects feelings of embarrassment and a lack of confidence in one's writing abilities. The observation underscores the emotional difficulty that certain students encounter when tasked with critically evaluating their own work.

*"Since I was not sure about my writing quality, I felt embarrassed when my teacher asked me to review my own writing (S1)."*

**Self-reflection and improvement**

The students highlight the value of self-evaluation for personal growth. They see it as an opportunity to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, learn from mistakes, and enhance their writing skills.

*"I believe the self-assessment is a necessary step that allows me to determine what is wrong with my writing. I will have the ability to make enhancements to my writing (S6)." "This activity was great because it allowed me to practice evaluating and identifying errors in my writing (S8)." "A self-assessment activity could help me improve my writing skills (S9)."*



***Fairness and objectivity***

The students imply that self-evaluation is a fair and objective approach. It allows students to present their perspective on their work, potentially offering insights that a teacher might not see.

*“The self-evaluation activity is a valuable and equitable approach for evaluating our understanding of our writing and reviewing our performance, using our own words, to gauge our level of achievement (S3, S7).”*

***Analytical and critical thinking***

The findings also indicated that students perceive the importance of cultivating their analytical and critical thinking abilities through self-assessment. The individuals were aware of the significance of possessing the ability to critically evaluate their work in order to identify any errors or areas that require enhancement.

*“In my view, this approach is commendable as it facilitates the opportunity for self-improvement by engaging in critical analysis of one’s writing and proficiently identifying any potential errors. Engaging with these activities may also foster the development of critical thinking skills (S8, S10).”*

Similarly, when it came to teacher assessment, students displayed a unanimous appreciation for the valuable feedback provided by their teachers. They viewed the feedback as a catalyst for enhancing their writing skills.

***Appreciation for constructive feedback***

Students expressed gratitude for the teachers’ efforts in providing feedback. It underlines the importance of constructive feedback in helping students recognize their writing level and areas for improvement.

*“It’s great because it indicates the level of my writing and where I need to improve. I express my gratitude to the teachers who have graciously provided their perspectives on my written work (S1).” “I believe it to be a very good thing. Thank you very much to the teacher for pointing out my errors and allowing me to revise my work (S6, S7).”*

***Awareness of unknown mistakes***

Students stated that feedback assists them in identifying errors that they were previously unaware of. It reflects feedback’s informative aspect in revealing gaps in one’s knowledge or skills.

*“I find it beneficial because I am able to improve or correct the errors in my writing that I am unaware of (S8, S9).”*

***Improvement and growth***

Feedback is perceived as a valuable avenue for honing skills and fostering growth, indicating the presence of a growth mindset within students.

*"It's good. I could edit my writing for a much better result (S2)." "I can derive valuable insights from the identification of errors in my own writing, thereby facilitating the enhancement of writing proficiency in subsequent endeavors (S10)."*

Further, the students' responses collectively underscored the significant role that both self-review and teacher review play in enhancing writing skills. The reviews provided not only facilitate students in recognizing and rectifying their areas of weakness but also contribute to a more profound comprehension of the subject matter and the cultivation of a more refined writing style. In addition, these practices cultivate individual responsibility and provide precise feedback for the purpose of progressively enhancing writing skills. Thus, it is reasonable that a combination of self-assessment and guided feedback from teachers is crucial for the overall development of effective writing skills. Finally, the students reveal a positive and transformative experience with their English writing skills through the course. They have observed not only tangible enhancements in their writing abilities but also expressed appreciation for the practicality and future applicability of these skills. The individuals acknowledge the personal obstacles they encountered and the subsequent development they experienced. They perceive the course as fundamental for their future educational endeavors and convey appreciation for the pedagogical methods and evaluation techniques employed.

## Discussion

This study aimed to compare the impact of teacher assessment and combined teacher-student assessment on Thai EFL students' writing competence, as well as their perceptions of these assessment methods. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a thorough understanding of the effectiveness of these assessment methods for improving writing skills.

Quantitatively, except for narrative paragraphs, the findings revealed no significant difference in overall writing performance between the group receiving only teacher evaluations and the one receiving teacher and student evaluations, which contradicts Ganji's study (2009). This implies that the influence of integrated evaluation on writing proficiency may vary depending on the context and only be effective in specific genres of writing rather than being universally applicable. The lack of a marked difference across most writing types challenges the assumption that combined assessment inherently leads to better writing outcomes. However, the notable difference in narrative paragraphs showed that this method might be more conducive to creativity and individual expression, as also confirmed by recent research (Alkhowarizmi & Hamdani, 2022). These aspects are likely to derive greater advantages from self-reflection and personalized feedback.

From a qualitative view, the study uncovers significant insights into students' perceptions of their writing abilities as well as the impact of various assessment methods. The apprehension and lack of confidence expressed by Thai EFL students in their English writing abilities highlight a critical area for educational intervention. The struggles with grammar, vocabulary, and native language interference are common among EFL learners (Aziz et al., 2020; Derakhshan & Karimian Shirejini, 2020) and underline the need for targeted instructional strategies. Interestingly, the students' views on self-assessment, despite its initial discomfort, highlighted its value in

fostering self-reflection, fairness, and critical thinking skills. The results align with the notion that self-assessment is deeply rooted in monitoring and metacognitive processes (Pantiwati & Husamah, 2017). This insight is vital for teachers, as it suggests that despite the challenges, self-assessment can be a powerful tool in language learning, particularly when combined with teacher feedback. The students' unanimous appreciation for teacher feedback in improving their writing skills emphasizes the value of teacher involvement in the learning process (Waluyo & Tuan, 2021).

The qualitative results demonstrated that students value a balance of self-assessment and teacher feedback, seeing both as essential for developing writing proficiency. This finding is consistent with educational theories that advocate for a learner-centered approach (Doyle, 2023), emphasizing the role of self-assessment alongside expert guidance. Teachers' feedback not only helps with specific weaknesses, but it also contributes to a broader understanding of the subject matter and the development of a refined writing style, which corroborates findings by Al-Wossabi (2019) and Maas (2017). This dual approach promotes individual responsibility while also providing specific feedback, both of which are necessary for progressive skill enhancement in writing.

Finally, the transformative experience reported by students in their writing skills over the course of the study highlights the practical and future applicability of the skills acquired. The positive reception of the pedagogical methods and evaluation techniques used in the course points to their effectiveness in addressing the students' needs and fostering their development, as also noted by Mazloomi and Khabiri (2018) and Ratminingsih et al. (2018). This finding is significant as it not only supports the use of combined assessment methods in improving writing skills but also emphasizes the importance of aligning educational strategies with students' perceptions and experiences. Overall, the study suggests that while teacher assessment remains a cornerstone of effective writing instruction, incorporating student self-assessment can provide additional benefits, particularly in fostering a deeper understanding and personal engagement with the learning process (Andrade, 2019; Andrade & Du, 2007; Apridayani et al., 2023).

In light of the findings, several implications emerge for EFL instruction and assessment practices. The differential impact across genres indicates a need for a more nuanced approach to teaching and assessing writing, where strategies are tailored to the specific demands of each genre. This can assist in addressing the distinct challenges and demands of various writing styles. Furthermore, students' recognition of the benefits of both self and teacher assessments emphasizes the significance of incorporating these methods into the curriculum. The study reveals the importance of self-assessment in developing self-reflection, critical thinking, and analytical thinking. This insight should prompt teachers to integrate self-assessment methods into their teaching, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and proficiency in language use among students. Additionally, the emphasis on teacher feedback in improving skills suggests a need for ongoing professional development for teachers to enhance their feedback methods. This will ensure that they are equipped to provide constructive, relevant, and supportive feedback that aligns with students' learning needs and preferences.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this study illustrates that combined teacher-student assessment in Thai EFL contexts positively influences students' writing competence, particularly in terms of personal growth, self-reflection, and critical thinking. While quantitative improvements in writing scores were genre-specific, the qualitative observations indicate a more extensive influence on students' writing competence and attitudes. Hence, the study emphasizes the significance of embracing a comprehensive methodology in language education that appreciates the significance of both quantitative performance measurements and qualitative learner experiences. This balance is crucial in developing well-rounded language competencies, catering not only to academic achievement but also to the personal and professional growth of students. Overall, this study indicates the complex interaction between assessment methods, student perceptions, and learning outcomes, offering valuable insights for EFL teaching practices, specifically within the Thai educational context.

Despite its meticulous planning, this study has limitations. This study was limited to EFL students at a single university in Thailand. This study's findings may or may not be applicable to EFL learners in other contexts. Extending the study to include a broader range of student demographics would provide a more complete understanding of the findings' applicability and generalizability. The next limitation concerns the research instruments. This study recognizes that including other qualitative data, such as interviews, observations, etc., could help the researcher delve deeper into students' perspectives and personal experiences. Incorporating experimental designs by providing pre- and post-tests that allow for a more in-depth analysis of the causal relationships between assessment methods and student outcomes would also make a significant contribution to the field. Finally, investigating teachers' perspectives on implementing combined assessments and the challenges they face may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the practicality and feasibility of these methods in a variety of educational settings.

## Author contributions

AA conceived the research idea, designed the study, conducted the data analysis, and wrote the manuscript. WH wrote the paper draft and revised the draft. KS collected the data and wrote the paper draft.

## Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available upon request.

## Declarations

### Ethical approval and consent to participate

All procedures performed in the study were in accordance with the ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all the individual participants. The study was approved by the ethics board; the certificate of approval of human research ethics was obtained (approval number: WUEC-23-061-01).

### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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