

Using Noticing Technique to develop English Essay Writing for Third Year Undergraduate Students of Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-Ok

การใช้เทคนิคการสังเกตช่วยพัฒนาการเขียนเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษ สำหรับนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 3 ของมหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลตะวันออก

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### Abstract

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of English essay writing skills and student attitudes towards the noticing technique among third-year undergraduates at Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-Ok. The research spanned eight weeks and four phases, involving 129 students from two campuses Academic Year B.E. 2563. Phase 1 was grammatical error identification. The researchers had students take a pre-test of grammatical features regarding the parts of speech. Phase 2 was the Input implementation of the three steps: pre-noticing technique, while-noticing technique, and post-noticing technique. Two tests were compared and analyzed using Independent-t-test statistics. Phase 3 was the interview by interviewing 10 samples, classified by the score differences between pre-and post-test of the top five and the bottom five students. Phase 4 was Intake application. At the end of the process, in the eighth week, students were assigned to write their essays on an assigned topic. The counted number of grammatical errors was compared to that of the number of errors found in the post-test (Phase 2). The following results were found. 1) The pre-test and the post-test of grammatical issues had a mean score of 14.47 or 42.39%, and 24.11 or 70.65%, respectively. 2) After the noticing technique intervention, the results of the post-test grammatical errors (Phase 2) were compared with those in their essays (Phase 4) were as follows. The verb errors were distinctively reduced (23%, 17%), with a slight decrease in nouns (24%, 22%) and adverbs (12%, 11%), but pronoun errors were stable (13%, 13%). However, errors in the use of prepositions noticeably increased (12%, 16%), while those involving conjunctions and adjectives slightly increased by (6%, 9%) and (10%, 12%) respectively. 3) The students had positive attitudes toward the noticing technique. In conclusion, this technique can potentially be used as another alternative instructional strategy, scaffolding the students' essay writing ability with the additional guidelines of the instructors.

**Keywords:** noticing technique, grammatical errors, essay writing

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## บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อประเมินประสิทธิผลของทักษะการเขียนเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษและทัศนคติของนักศึกษาที่มีต่อเทคนิคการสังเกตของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี ชั้นปีที่ 3 มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลตะวันออกจำนวน 129 คน เป็น ปีการศึกษา พ.ศ. 2563 ผู้วิจัยใช้เวลาแปดสัปดาห์ในการทำวิจัย แบ่งออกเป็นสี่ขั้นตอน ระยะเวลาที่ 1 การระบุปัญหา: ผู้วิจัยให้นักศึกษาทดสอบไวยากรณ์ในส่วนชนิดของคำ ค่ะแนบที่ได้รับถูกนับและบันทึกข้อผิดพลาดในด้านไวยากรณ์เพื่อหาปัญหาด้านไวยากรณ์ของนักศึกษา ระยะเวลาที่ 2 ป้อนข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยใช้เวลา 4 สัปดาห์ในสามขั้นตอน เทคนิคการสังเกตล่วงหน้า เทคนิคการสังเกตขณะสังเกต และเทคนิคการสังเกตภายหลัง ในทำนองเดียวกัน ค่ะแนบที่ได้รับจากการสอบหลังการใช้เทคนิคการสังเกตจะถูกนับและบันทึกข้อผิดพลาดด้านไวยากรณ์เพื่อเปรียบเทียบประสิทธิภาพของนักศึกษาระหว่างในระยะเวลาที่ 1 และระยะเวลาที่ 2 ค่ะแนบของการทดสอบสองแบบถูกนำมาเปรียบเทียบและวิเคราะห์โดยใช้ สถิติทดสอบ Independent-T-test ระยะเวลาที่ 3 การสัมภาษณ์ เพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกของนักศึกษาเกี่ยวกับการใช้เทคนิคการสังเกตในการเขียนเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษ นักวิจัยใช้เวลา 2 สัปดาห์ในการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวน 10 คน โดยจำแนกจากความแตกต่างของคะแนนระหว่างการสอบก่อนและหลังของนักเรียน 5 อันดับแรกและ 5 อันดับสุดท้าย ขั้นตอนที่ 4 นำวิธีการไปใช้ ในตอนท้ายของกระบวนการ นักเรียนได้รับมอบหมายให้เขียนเรียงความในหัวข้อที่ได้รับมอบหมาย จำนวนข้อผิดพลาดทางไวยากรณ์ในเรียงความถูกนับ และนำมาเปรียบเทียบกับข้อผิดพลาดที่พบในการทดสอบภายหลัง (ระยะเวลาที่ 2) ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1) ประเด็นทางไวยากรณ์ก่อนการทดสอบและหลังการทดสอบมีคะแนนเฉลี่ย 14.47 หรือ 42.39% และ 24.11 หรือ 70.65% ตามลำดับ 2) หลังจากการใช้เทคนิคการสังเกต ผลลัพธ์ของข้อผิดพลาดทางไวยากรณ์จากการทดสอบภายหลังการใช้ (ระยะเวลาที่ 2) เทียบกับในเรียงความหลังใช้เทคนิคการสังเกต (ระยะเวลาที่ 4) มีดังนี้ ข้อผิดพลาดของคำกริยาลดลงอย่างชัดเจน (23%, 17%) คำนามและคำวิเศษณ์ลดลงเล็กน้อย (24%, 22%) (12%, 11%) แต่คำสรรพนามผิดพลาดคงที่ (13%, 13%) อย่างไรก็ตาม ข้อผิดพลาดด้านคำบุพบทเพิ่มขึ้นอย่างเห็นได้ชัด (12%, 16%) ในขณะที่คำสันธานและคำคุณศัพท์เพิ่มขึ้นตามลำดับ (6%, 9%), (10%, 12%) และ 3) ผลการสัมภาษณ์พบว่า นักเรียนมีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อเทคนิคการสังเกตและนำไปใช้ต่อไป กล่าวโดยสรุป เทคนิคนี้สามารถใช้เป็นกลยุทธ์ในการสอนทางเลือกอีกทางหนึ่ง ซึ่งยกระดับความสามารถในการเขียนเรียงความของนักเรียนด้วยการแนะแนวทางเพิ่มเติมของผู้สอน

**คำสำคัญ:** เทคนิคการสังเกต, ข้อผิดพลาดทางไวยากรณ์, การเขียนเรียงความ

## Introduction

Researchers have conducted numerous studies to understand the various aspects of essay writing essays, including the writing process, the structure of essays, and the impact of different teaching methods on students' essay writing abilities (Alsowat, 2022; Barkaoui, 2007; Chen & Cheng, 2016; Cho & Schunn, 2007; Graff & Birkenstein, 2010; Lavelle et al., 2002; Mulyati & Hadiano, 2003; Swales & Feak, 2004). In doing so, Graff and Birkenstein (2010) investigated students' essay writing and how it can improve students' critical thinking and argumentation skills. A study by Cho and Schunn (2007) investigated the effects of teaching students how to use visual representations in their essay writing. Alsowat (2022) examined the effectiveness of using hybrid learning to improve students' essay writing. A study by Liu et al. (2016) examined the impact of feedback on students' essay writing skills and found that effective feedback can lead to significant improvements in students' writing abilities. Lavelle et al. (2002) explored the differences in essay writing performance between native and non-native English speakers. However, undergraduate students often face difficulty with essay writing, such as organizing thoughts and lack of critical thinking skills. Reco and Sanchez (2018) found that many students struggle with understanding the essay prompt and fail to address the main topic. Finally, students often lack the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct proper research and integrate sources effectively into their essays (Kisa & Yildiz, 2020).

Grammar is also a crucial aspect of essay writing, and many undergraduate students have problems with it. Students often make errors in sentence structure, punctuation, and word choice. Sultana and Hossain (2017) found that students frequently struggle with the correct use of articles, verb tenses, and prepositions. Another study by Wang and Wen (2018) identified that students usually lack the necessary knowledge of grammar rules to identify and correct their own errors effectively. These grammatical issues can impact the clarity and effectiveness of students' writing.

The noticing technique, as proposed by Schmidt (1990) refers to the process by which learners become consciously aware of language features that were previously unnoticed or only partially noticed. According to Schmidt, noticing is a necessary condition for learning, and learners must consciously perceive the language features they are exposed to in order to acquire them. Noticing technique has been used by educators and researchers to help develop students' grammar skills in writing. Ellis (1994) expanded on Schmidt's concept of noticing, suggesting that input and output noticing are both essential for language acquisition. Qin and Wen (2018) investigated the effectiveness of the noticing technique in improving the use of grammatical collocations in EFL writing. Al Khatib (2019) examined the effectiveness of the noticing technique in improving the grammatical accuracy of EFL learners' writing. Cai and Zhang (2019) examined the effectiveness of the noticing technique in improving the use of passive voice in EFL writing. While all three studies focused on the use of the noticing technique in improving different aspects of EFL writing, they differed in their specific focus areas. Qin and Wen (2018) and Cai and

Zhang (2019) both found significant improvements in their respective areas of focus, while Al Khatib (2019) found significant improvement in grammatical accuracy more broadly. Overall, these studies demonstrate the potential of the noticing technique to improve various aspects of EFL writing, highlighting the importance of incorporating this technique into language teaching and learning. In a Thai context, Manochiopini and Taweek (2020) and Srikrachang (2017) share similarities in terms of their use of the noticing technique to improve students' grammar in essay writing. Both studies found that the students who received noticing technique instruction showed improvement in grammatical accuracy and complexity. However, the study by Manochiopini and Taweek (2020) went further by incorporating a writing competition to motivate the students, which resulted in a higher level of motivation and engagement. The study by Srikrachang (2017), on the other hand, utilized a mixed-methods approach to analyze the students' writing and perception of the technique.

Nevertheless, few studies have reported on the effects of incorporating noticing technique on essay writing in a Thai context. In doing so, this study will employ noticing technique focusing on grammatical skills on word parts of speech to develop undergraduate students' essay writing. The importance of the parts of speech in essay writing is highlighted by many scholars. For instance, according to Vora and Joshi (2016), understanding the parts of speech helps writers to create clear and concise sentences that effectively communicate their ideas. Similarly, Pidaparti (2015) emphasizes that using the correct parts of speech is essential for establishing sentence structure and ensuring coherence in writing. Therefore, it is important for writers to have a strong grasp of parts of speech in order to produce well-written essays.

## **Objectives**

To meet the requirements, this study was conducted to discuss the relevant issues of grammatical skills regarding word parts of speech in essay writing in addition to the noticing technique, which is the strategy used in this research. The objectives of this study were to determine the effectiveness of using the noticing technique in developing English essay writing skills of third-year undergraduate students, and to investigate students' attitudes towards using the noticing technique.

## **Literature Review**

### **Essay Writing**

Essay writing involves creating a written piece that conveys an argument or viewpoint. Gupta and Bansal (2013) describe an essay as a structured piece of writing that presents evidence to support a viewpoint. The value of essay writing lies in its potential to enhance critical thinking and communication skills while also contributing to academic success (Khandagale, 2016). In academic settings, essays are frequently employed as evaluation tools, and the ability to compose a well-organized and coherent essay is essential for academic and professional achievement (Barnet

et al., 2013). As a result, essay writing is a crucial skill for academic achievement and effective communication, necessitating more study and research by educators and researchers.

Various studies on essay writing have been conducted extensively in the field of language teaching and learning. Some of the notable works include those by Chen and Cheng (2015), who explored the effectiveness of teacher feedback on essay writing, Liu and Hansen (2002), who examined the impact of pre-writing activities on the quality of essays, and Zhang (2018), who investigated the relationship between vocabulary size and essay writing proficiency. Other studies have focused on various aspects of essay writing such as grammar, organization, and coherence. These works have contributed to a better understanding of the complexities of essay writing and have provided valuable insights for language teachers and learners to improve their essay writing skills.

In addition, studies on essay writing have extensively examined the role of grammatical accuracy in writing proficiency. For example, Wang and Li (2019) investigated the effects of direct and indirect feedback on grammatical accuracy in essay writing. Kılıçkaya and Daloğlu (2020) examined the relationship between grammatical accuracy and writing proficiency among Turkish university students. In another study, Saengboonmee (2017) explored the use of noticing techniques to improve grammatical accuracy in essay writing. These works have highlighted the importance of grammatical accuracy in effective essay writing and have provided valuable insights into how language teachers can help students improve their writing skills.

### **Grammatical Skills on Word Parts of Speech**

Parts of speech are an essential element of grammar that categorizes words based on their function in a sentence, as stated by Schleppegrell and Colombi (2002). A proper understanding of parts of speech is vital for creating coherent sentences and developing strong writing skills. The accurate use of parts of speech leads to clear and precise meaning, making writing more effective. It also aids in the proper use of punctuation marks and helps to create well-structured and grammatically correct sentences. Therefore, a thorough knowledge of parts of speech is significant in achieving effective writing in any language, as emphasized by Ismail and Nor (2017).

Numerous studies have been conducted in the past decade on the role of parts of speech in essay writing. For instance, Liu and Zhang (2010) explored the effects of explicit instruction on the use of parts of speech in improving writing quality. A study by Yang and Huang (2018) investigated the effects of a multimodal approach in teaching parts of speech on improving writing skills. Muraoka (2019) examined the relationship between parts of speech and the quality of the writing of Japanese university students. These works have contributed to a better understanding of the significance of parts of speech in writing and have provided valuable insights into how language teachers can help students improve their writing skills.

## Noticing Technique

The noticing technique is a widely used approach in language teaching that involves drawing learners' attention to the form and meaning of language features through focused activities (Schmidt, 1990). According to Schmidt and Frota (1986), noticing is the process of becoming aware of certain linguistic features through explicit instruction or exposure to input. Research has shown that noticing can be an effective method in enhancing second language acquisition, particularly in grammar and vocabulary (Ellis, 2005; Schmidt, 1995). Therefore, the use of the noticing technique is often recommended in language classrooms to help learners develop their language skills.

Several studies have explored the use of the noticing technique in the development of parts of speech awareness among language learners. For instance, Lyster and Ranta (2013) investigated the effects of explicit and implicit corrective feedback on learners' noticing of verb tense and agreement errors. A study by Yildirim and Tatar (2017) examined the impact of noticing-focused activities on learners' awareness of adjective forms and functions. Furthermore, studies have also examined the relationship between parts of speech awareness and writing proficiency. For example, Liu and Jiang (2018) explored the correlation between parts of speech knowledge and essay writing performance among Chinese EFL learners. These studies suggest that the use of the noticing technique can enhance learners' parts of speech awareness and subsequently improve their writing proficiency.

Several studies have investigated the effectiveness of using the noticing technique to develop parts of speech and essay writing skills. For instance, Rahman and Rahman (2015) explored the effects of the noticing technique on the development of parts of speech knowledge and essay writing among Bangladeshi EFL learners. Similarly, Chang and Wu (2012) used the noticing technique to improve Taiwanese EFL students' knowledge of parts of speech and writing proficiency. Furthermore, Zhang and Yang (2021) investigated the impact of a noticing-based approach on developing the use of parts of speech in essay writing among Chinese non-English majors. These studies demonstrate the potential of the noticing technique in enhancing parts of speech and essay writing skills among language learners.

## Research Questions

1. How effective is the use of the noticing technique in improving the English essay writing skills of third-year undergraduate students?
2. What are the students' attitudes towards the noticing technique?

## Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods in a quasi-experiment to assess the efficacy of an educational intervention. It combines the third and fourth quasi-experimental designs, utilizing a one-group pretest-posttest method

without a comparison or control group (Cook & Campbell, 1979, p. 99). Student essay writing skills are measured before and after the intervention using a standardized rubric, with the results compared to evaluate the effectiveness of the noticing technique.

The symbol of this design is as follows:

<u>Pre-test</u>	<u>Treatment</u>	<u>Post-test</u>
01	X	02

**For the research question 1**, the following research instruments were applied:

1. A 60-question pre-test and post-test of 4 multiple choices answers, which was adapted from the paper-based TOEFL (Phillips, 2001) because using TOEFL questions for pre-test and post-test assessments can provide researchers with a reliable, valid, and practical tool to measure English language proficiency in this study. Although the current TOEFL format no longer tests explicit grammar points, the TOEFL test measures the ability to use English in an academic setting, and this includes understanding and using grammatical structures and vocabulary appropriately. Parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions, are the building blocks of sentences and are crucial for constructing clear and effective essays.

Some examples of the questions are as follows:

1. *A basic transformation of the traditional marriage relationships is under way in the United States today, ..... many variables are influencing the direction of change.*  
*a. and                      b. but                      c. or                      d. so*
2. *A coral reef, an intricate aquatic community of plants and animals, .... found only in warm, shallow, sunlit seas.*  
*a. are                      b. is                      c. which is                      d. which are*
3. *A footnote is ..... employed to give information that is too long or too detailed to be included in the body of a text.*  
*a. characteristically      b. characteristics      c. characteristic      d. character*

2. The noticing technique exercises for acquiring the gap of grammatical skills.

Some examples of the questions are as follows:

1. *A large firm can have more ..... in its employment policies than a small firm.*  
*a. disciplinarily      b. disciplinary      c. discipline      d. disciplines*
2. *My brother and ..... went to school yesterday.*  
*a. me                      b. I                      c. mine                      d. my*
3. *A galaxy ..... of gas, dust, and billions of stars.*  
*a. composes                      b. is composed                      c. composed                      d. compose*



3. The students' essays after the treatment of the noticing technique under the topic "The Importance of English in My Career."

**For the research question 2,** the following research instruments were applied:

1. The interview questions: a structured interview was conducted due to its consistency, objectivity and validity as shown below.

1. *Do you think that noticing techniques can scaffold your English grammar?*
2. *Why do you believe this technique improves your English learning achievement?*
3. *How do you use this technique to study English by yourself?*
4. *Do you have any other suggestions for noticing techniques? If so, please specify.*
5. *What are your suggestions for learners to use the noticing technique in learning English?*

2. Observations: unstructured observation with note-taking on any events or behavior of the students considered relevant, without a predetermined framework.

## Data Analysis

An analysis of data using 60 questions to test grammatical ability was applied in order to assess the proficiency of the students in understanding and applying parts of speech. To conduct the analysis, the students were asked to complete the test by answering all 60 questions. Once the responses were collected, they were scored based on the number of correct answers. For example, if a participant answered 45 questions correctly, their grammatical ability score was  $(45/60) * 100 = 75\%$ . Then the researcher used the t-test for comparing the means of two groups and determining whether any observed differences were statistically significant. Next, for the descriptive method, the researcher conducted the analysis as follows: 1) Data preparation. The interviews in the Thai version were translated into English and anonymized by removing personal identifiers. 2) Data categorization and analysis. Sort and categorize the responses by coding their themes with the tabulated demonstration. 3) Data interpretation. Describe patterns, explore the theme relationships, and assess the validity of findings. 4) Results presentation. Present the findings visually and report the detailed results.

## Population

129 third-year students majoring in English in the Faculty of Liberal Arts in the Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-Ok: Chakrabongse Bhuvanarth Campus major and Bangphra Campus, 64 of whom were from the Chakrabongse Bhuvanarth Campus and 65 from the Bangphra Campus. The interviews were conducted with the 10 students chosen by purposive sampling and classified into 5-top list students and 5 bottom list students by their different scores when comparing the pre-test and the post-test.



## **Research Procedures, Timeline of Activities, and Treatment**

This study took eight weeks to complete the research procedures, which were divided into four phases: Phase 1 grammatical error identification, Phase 2 input implementation, Phase 3 the Interview, and Phase 4 intake application. The details were as follows:

### **Phase 1 Grammatical error identification (1 Week)**

The grammatical errors in EFL learners are commonly recognized due to the different characteristics of the language (Khumpee & Yodkamlue, 2017). In Thailand, Thai learners also encounter such shortcomings, as illustrated in the study conducted by Khumpee and Yodkamlue (2017). To specify the actual problems of students in the charge of the researchers, in the first week (three hours), the students took a pre-test of 60 question items chosen from TOEFL and a pre-test of 200-word essay writing on the topic of “The importance of English in My Career”. To verify the grammatical errors in the sentences, the 60-question pre-test on grammar, containing only 7 parts of speech considered to be proportionally chosen from TOEFL, was conducted as the previous research showed some doubts about the quality of teacher-made tests (Haynie, 1997). The students were allowed 60 minutes to complete the test. The scores and grammatical issues were recorded. The test consisted of 7 parts of speech, comprising 11 nouns, 5 pronouns, 14 verbs, 6 adverbs, 8 adjectives, 8 prepositions, and 8 conjunctions (interjection was omitted as it is always used in spoken language). The grammatical errors were recorded, and the scores of errors for each part of speech were counted as 1 point per error. Although the exercises can be designed in explicitness and implicitness (Batstone, 1996), the exercises in this study were chosen from the design based on the explicitness to practically achieve ‘intake’ due to the limited time. Batstone (1996) stated that the tasks designed for the noticing techniques should focus learners’ attention on the target language. The recurring opportunities in the exercises for the students’ internalization should be provided for the noticing technique whose importance is as “the gateway to subsequent learning” (Batstone, 1996, p. 100). The procedures of using the noticing technique are explained in Phase 2.

### **Phase 2 Input implementation (4 weeks)**

According to Barnawi (2010), this phase consisted of three steps: the pre-noticing technique; the while-noticing technique, and the post-noticing technique. The detailed timeline was as follows:

Week 2 (3 hours) was the duration of the pre-noticing technique to instruct the students on feedback. The researchers delivered the noticing technique exercises which were designed based on the proportion of grammatical errors found in the pre-test. After that, the researchers instructed the students by having them ‘focus on the form’ of each question item. The researchers also let them collaboratively work on the tasks with their colleagues before submitting the finished tasks for receiving feedback from the researchers.

Week 3-4 (6 hours) was the duration of the while-noticing technique. The researchers returned the former tasks (the pre-test questions) with their feedback to the students and delivered the noticing technique exercises to them with clues as to how to compare with them. The researchers asked the students to write down what they had noticed as remarks. Finally, the researchers assigned the students to classify remarks into each part of speech.

Week 5 (3 hours) was the post-noticing stage. This stage was designed to help the learners reflect on what they had learned. After six hours of implementing grammatical issues using the noticing technique, the researchers had the students conduct the post-test, which was adapted from the version of the pre-test by alternating some question items or answers. Likewise, the scores and grammatical issues were recorded. Consequently, the comparison of the pre-test and post-test was conducted by using an independent t-test.

### **Phase 3 The Interview (2 weeks)**

This phase was designed to obtain insight into the students' opinions on using the noticing technique for scaffolding grammatical issues and so enhance their writing ability. In the sixth and seventh weeks, the researchers interviewed the 10 samples drawn by purposive sampling or judgement sampling, which was the considered choice of participants due to the qualities the researchers determined as what needed to be known and what information they were willing to provide based on their knowledge or experience. In addition, this non-random approach was based on people with particular characteristics who could potentially assist with the relevant research (Etikan et al., 2016).

The researchers purposefully chose 10 samples classified by the difference between pre-test and post-test counts from the top-5 lists and the bottom-5 lists to obtain their comments on using the noticing technique. The five areas to be interviewed about in Thai were the mentioned teaching strategy and its impact on their understanding and writing skills.

### **Phase 4 Intake application (1 week)**

Noticing is defined as "the necessary and sufficient condition for the conversion of input to intake" (Schmidt, 1993, p. 209). In order to have students further apply the grammatical knowledge and verify the results of using the noticing technique, in the eighth week, the researchers assigned the students to write an essay of at least 200 words in three hours under the topic "The Importance of English in My Career". After finishing the tasks, the researchers counted the errors for each part of speech and compared the results to the written essay pre-test. The number of incorrect parts of speech may reflect their ability in writing tasks.

## **Results**

The results of the comparison of learning achievement between the mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test showed that before using the noticing technique  $\bar{X} = 14.47$ , while

after the intervention  $\bar{X} = 42.39$ . The percentages were 24.11 and 70.65, respectively. This illustrates that the learning achievement after treatment was higher than that before the treatment. In other words, the noticing techniques can scaffold students' grammatical issues. The analysis results can be presented as shown as follows in Table 1:

**Table 1:** The comparison of learning achievement before and after the treatment of using the noticing technique

Test	n	k		SD	t	df	sig.
Pre-test	129	60	14.47	14.28	68.43	128	0.00**
Post-test	129	60	42.39	40.38			

The independent sample t-test shows that the difference in scores between the pre-test scores ( $n = 129$ ,  $\bar{X} = 14.47$ ,  $SD = 14.28$ ) and the post-test scores ( $n = 129$ ,  $\bar{X} = 42.39$ ,  $SD = 40.38$ ) was statistically significant ( $t (68.43) p < .001$ )

### Interview

The researchers conducted structured interviews with the ten sample students by asking four questions focusing on the efficiency of learning strategy, and a fifth question as a semi-structured interview to let the students express their opinions which potentially express emerging data. The obtained answers are shown in Table 2 (1-4), and Table 3 (5).

**Table 2:** Results of interviewing samples (Items 1-4: Structured interviews)

No.	Interviewees' answers
1	1. Yes, 2. I think that it is easier. It can make me recall the exercise while I am doing the test. 3. I pay more attention to the sentences. 4. I think that it will be better to use this technique in essay writing.
2	1. Yes, 2. I like it. It makes me feel like copying my friends' works but with only a little noticing. 3. I can recall the rules when I do the task. 4. No
3	1. Yes, 2. I don't exactly explain. I feel that my choice must be correct. I really feel it. 3. I substitute the similar words to replace what I have done in the exercises. 4. No
4	1. Yes, 2. I concentrate on the rules that we practice in the sheets and I can recall them when I do the test. 3. I do it as in the test. 4. No
5	1. Yes, 2. I pay attention to the words nearby and recall the exercise. I think that it is not so difficult as it has ever been. 3. I look at the words nearby first. 4. No

No.	Interviewees' answers
6	1.Yes, 2. I do the exercise with my attention and try to think of the rules. Then I read the sentence. 3. It is ok when I read it, it is correct maybe I do many tasks. 4. I want to practice it more to improve my writing.
7	1.Yes, 2. I do the task immediately and I read it while I was writing. 3. I think that I can do it because of my attention so I will pay more attention to my task. 4. No
8	1. Yes, 2. I think that because I like doing exercises on the sheet. 3. I immediately do my work after getting new lesson. 4. No
9	1. Yes, 2. I feel accustomed to the sentences. 3. I always do homework with paying more attention. 4. No
10	1. Yes, 2. I think that doing exercises greatly helps understand English grammar. 3. I like doing this kind of exercises. 4. No

### The Interview Result Analysis (1-4)

#### 1. Do you think that noticing technique can scaffold you to use English grammar?

- All of the samples agreed that this technique can scaffold their English grammar.

#### 2. Why do you believe this technique improves your English learning achievement?

The samples expressed their positive opinions in different words:

- recall the structure
- I feel that my choice must be correct.
- I feel accustomed to the sentences.
- I think of the rules.
- I read it while I was writing.
- I like doing exercises on the sheet.
- It makes me feel like copying my friend's work, but noticing is slightly different.

According to the results, the answers of the four samples are categorized as follows: the first sample recalls the structure by mentioning the importance of getting better understanding, highlighting key clues, and attracting the attention of students; the second sample emphasizes paying attention to neighboring words; the third sample suggests underlining the clues and practicing them by speaking aloud; and the fourth sample emphasizes the importance of practicing noticing. Furthermore, all four samples achieved the highest scores and explained the method of following noticing, which focuses on paying attention to form, such as neighboring words and automatic responses. This ability helps them recall the structure effectively.

#### 3. How do you use this technique to study English by yourself?

The answers of the samples suggested some of the four key terms: 'pay attention', 'noticing', 'focus on form', and 'practice'. Some samples answered the questions with different

ideas. During the interviews, the interviewers asked for details to confirm the correctness of their interpretations and noted them down in parentheses.

- I pay more attention to the sentences. (attention) (noticing) (focus on form)
- I can recall the rules when I do the task. (practice) (attention) (focus on form)
- I do it as in the test. (practice) (noticing) (attention)
- I substitute the similar words to replace what I have done in the exercises. (attention) (noticing) (practice)
- I look at the words nearby first. (attention) (noticing) (focus on form)
- It is ok when I read it, it is correct maybe I do many tasks. (practice)
- I think that I can do it because of my attention so I will pay more attention to my task. (attention)
- I immediately do my work after getting new lesson. (attention) (practice)
- I always do homework with paying more attention. (attention) (practice)
- I like doing this kind of exercises. (attention) (practice)

The four key terms are interrelated due to the paradigm of noticing. From their answers, it can be interpreted that the samples recognized that the noticing technique requires their attention to notice or focus on linguistic form and can enhance them to relatively change from 'input' to 'intake' in their real tasks.

#### 4. Do you have any other suggestions for noticing techniques? If so, please specify.

Eight samples did not have any other ideas.

- I think that it will be better to use this technique in essay writing.
- I want to practice them more to improve my writing.

The above answers can illustrate the need to further use the noticing technique to scaffold their writing abilities. They imply their positive attitudes towards the noticing technique.

#### 5. What are your suggestions for the learners to use the noticing technique in learning English?

The students did not offer any comments.

**Table 3:** Results of interviewing samples (Item 5: Semi-structured interviews)

No.	Interviewee's answers
1	I get better understanding because I highlight the key clues. Underlining can attract the attention of students.
2	The importance is to pay attention to the neighboring words. Noticing is on that base.
3	I think that the only two things to understand English lessons are in this technique. I underline the clues to notice and practice them by speaking aloud.
4	Practicing is important. It makes me do the task automatically.

No.	Interviewee's answers
5	The important issue for me to get success is that I spend time doing the exercises without my cell phone. I look at them carefully.
6	Well, actually, I have no ideas but I think that to make the students understand is to practice a lot.
7	I think that the noticing technique should be used and sentences should be written many times.
8	For me, the noticing technique makes me focus on the exercise. I can do the work correctly.
9	I think that there should be the exercises like this in any new structure.
10	I have no ideas.

The samples suggested that learners should pay attention to and notice the sentences, and practice what they have learned (with some of them focusing on noticing and practicing). The emerging data enhanced the noticing technique by highlighting and underlining key clues, speaking aloud, supplementing exercises with any new structure, and avoiding the use of the telephone.

### Essay writing after the intervention

In the eighth week, the researchers assigned the students to write a 200-word essay in three hours to examine the overall grammatical errors in parts of speech under the topic "The Importance of English in My Career." To examine the tendency of the learners' development, the researchers took the number of recorded errors from the pre-test of essay writing to compare them with the findings in the post-test essay. The details are shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

**Table 4:** Errors found in the pre-test of essay writing

Errors	N	Pron	V	Adv	Adj	Conj	Prep	Total items
Amount	321	175	304	158	129	82	156	1325
Percentage	24	13	23	12	10	6	12	100

**Notes:** N = Nouns, Pron = Pronouns, V = Verbs, Adv = Adverbs, Adj = Adjectives, Conj = Conjunction, Prep = Preposition

In the pre-test, the highest number of errors were found in nouns (N), followed by verbs (V) and prepositions (Prep). Pronouns (Pron), adverbs (Adv), adjectives (Adj), and conjunctions (Conj) also had a significant number of errors but comparatively less than nouns, verbs, and prepositions.

**Table 5:** Errors found in the post-test of essay writing

Errors	N	Pron	V	Adv	Adj	Conj	Prep	Total
Amount	72	43	54	36	39	28	52	324
percentage	22	13	17	11	12	9	16	100

**Notes:** N = Nouns, Pron = Pronouns, V = Verbs, Adv = Adverbs, Adj = Adjectives, Conj = Conjunction, Prep = Preposition

Tables 5 shows some improvement in the overall error percentage. However, the order of the frequency of errors remains similar, with nouns having the highest number of errors followed by verbs, prepositions, and pronouns. Adjectives and adverbs also had a significant number of errors, while conjunctions had relatively fewer errors.

### Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

According to research, writing is considered the most important skill in language acquisition, and it requires not only a vast vocabulary but also a solid understanding of grammatical rules, where parts of speech play an indispensable role (Barnet et al., 2013). Although it is difficult to determine whether learners can understand grammatical issues due to the limited time of research, the reflective responses of students who use techniques such as highlighting and underlining to notice key clues that help them choose the correct words indicate that this teaching strategy focusing on "attention," "consciousness," and "focus on form" can be effective (Barnet et al., 2013).

This study found that using the noticing technique led to a significant improvement in learning achievement which related to Nassaji and Fotos who investigated the effects of three different instructional approaches on paragraph writing skills among ESL learners: traditional instruction, explicit noticing, and input enhancement (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). The results revealed that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant, indicating a notable improvement in learning achievement due to the intervention of using the noticing technique.

Another study found that the noticing technique can improve grammatical accuracy in essay writing (Saengboonme, 2017). The participants in this study recognized the importance of attention, noticing, focus on form, and practice when employing the noticing technique, and their feedback provided valuable insights into the potential benefits and applications of the technique in English learning. The participants in the study suggested that highlighting and underlining key clues in sentences, supplementing exercises with new structures, and providing learners with varied and challenging exercises could enhance the noticing technique (Barnet et al., 2013). These strategies have also been found to be effective in improving reading comprehension (Huang & Guthrie, 2014) and enhancing learning and performance (Sweller et al., 2011).

The results of the study indicate that nouns, verbs, and prepositions are fundamental components of sentences and often carry a lot of meaning, so it is crucial to master their forms



and usage for effective communication (Barnet et al., 2013). Pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, and conjunctions also play important roles in sentence structure and meaning, so learners should aim to improve their understanding and usage of these parts of speech as well.

In conclusion, the noticing technique can be an effective teaching strategy for improving language learners' grammatical accuracy in writing. Strategies such as highlighting and underlining key clues, supplementing exercises with new structures, and providing learners with varied and challenging exercises can enhance the effectiveness of the technique. By identifying and addressing areas of weakness in grammar, learners can improve their overall language proficiency and communication skills.

## Conclusion

This research focuses on the noticing technique used for scaffolding the students' grammatical issues leading to their writing ability. Due to the nature of essay writing, which requires multi-skills, the findings may be influenced from diverse sources the researchers cannot control. This study used the quasi-experiment by using an independent sample t-test to statistically test the treatment Implementation, exercises for parts of speech, as to whether they can scaffold the understandings of grammatical issues or not. The results of the test answered the research questions. The results of comparison of learning achievement between the mean of the pre-test and of the post-test showed that before using the noticing technique  $\bar{X} = 14.47$  while  $\bar{X} = 42.39$  after the treatment and the percentages were 24.11 and 70.65 respectively. This illustrates that the learning achievement after treatment was higher than that before the treatment with the analysis results showing that the difference in scores between the pre-test scores ( $n = 129$ ,  $\bar{X} = 14.47$ ,  $SD = 14.28$ ) and the post- test scores ( $n = 129$ ,  $\bar{X} = 42.39$ ,  $SD = 40.38$ ) were statistically significant  $t(68.43) p < .001$ . A qualitative approach was also conducted with the 10 students chosen by purposive sampling mixed between the five top list students and the five bottom list students classified by their different scores between the pre-test and the post-test aiming to find the data which emerged during the interview process. The interviews show the results with relevance to the results from the t-test. The statistical results accompanied with the interviews potentially support the effectiveness of this learning strategy. When comparing the errors found in post-test and in the essay written after intervention, this showed that the errors in nouns and adverbs were slightly reduced, but distinctively reduced in verbs. Errors in pronoun use were unchanged. However, errors in prepositions noticeably increased, while those in conjunctions and adverbs slightly increased. The comparison of the two tasks may not obviously indicate the effectiveness of the noticing strategy due to the different tasks, but it helps indicate the tendency of grammatical improvement for instructors to focus on. In other words, this technique can potentially be used as an alternative learning strategy scaffolding students' writing ability with the additional requirement of instructor's management.

As this study acknowledges the effectiveness of the students' progress by using the noticing technique, it suggests some possible improvements in teaching or learning strategies. However, in the era of globalization in which most materials concern communicative paradigms, the problems of writing ability are still challenging in the context of EFL classes. During the interviews, an interviewee, who had a positive idea about using the noticing technique in practicing grammatical issues, suggested that there should be more exercises for the new structure. The study results showed a reduction in the number of errors involving nouns and verbs, but they were still recorded in the top rank of common grammatical errors. Research on the parts of speech should be intensified to acquire learning strategies suitable for finding the right method to remove those shortcomings.

This study faced limitations such as a short research period, potentially hindering the comprehensiveness of the results on students' writing abilities. To better understand writing development, further study is needed to track learners' progress and to assess the effectiveness of learning materials over time. Additionally, the research could be expanded to include the noticing technique for punctuation and capitalization, which would further help learners improve their writing skills and emulate native speakers.

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