

The Effects of Revision on L2 writing skill Competency: An Experimental Study on Peer and Teacher-engaged Revisions

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Abstract: This study investigated the impact of peer revision and teacher-integrated revision on writing skill proficiency of international school students in Malaysia. Four research questions were addressed in the current study: 1) Does teacher-student revision on a reading passage about which a piece of writing is composed, produce a positive effect on writing skill competency of Malaysian ESL international school students? 2) Do Malaysian ESL writing students who receive teacher-involved revision outperform those who gain peer group revision? 3) To what extent, does teacher-student revision generate a positive effect in writing skill competency of Malaysia ESL international school students? 4) Do Malaysian ESL international school students who involve in peer group revision outperform those with NO revision in their writing skill competency? Forty-eight international school students participated in this study. They were divided into three groups: 1) the teacher-student revision group (treatment group1); 2) the peer revision group (treatment group2); and 3) the NO-revision group (control group). Results of the study suggest a very positive role of revision which is combined with teacher direct and indirect feedback as well as instructions. Further, they clearly show that carrying out peer group revision before any tests has no even tiny effects on the writing skill competency.

Key words: teacher-student revision; peer group; feedback; writing skill competency; treatment group; control group

1. Introduction

For many years, reading and writing skills were (and maybe still are) taught separately. Even nowadays, it is not hard to find several English language centres and institutes approaching them discretely. They sometimes reason saying "what if some particular students suffer only poor writing or reading skill?" which is what Brown D. (2001) approves of it. Brown D. Extremely advocates the integration of skills like reading and writing and even the rest two i.e. speaking and listening. He also adds that only for academic purposes where learners feel they are poor in a particular skill, a disintegrated skill proficiency course is profitable. However when it comes to primary school learners who are mostly novice writers and readers, the importance of interconnections between the said skills outstands.

In the last ten years, research studies have revealed that reading and writing activities are to much extent, intertwined. Basically reading affects writing and writing influences reading. ESL learners in general and international school writers in particular, require to link reading to writing and vice versa as essential components of language arts "pie". Development of an acceptable piece of writing urges ESL writing students to do much reading in order to obtain information, experience, register, vocabulary, reasoning to name but a few. One of the major reasons why we read is to learn. Then when we write, we use the knowledge we already attained and transmit it in print.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer four research questions: 1) Does teacher-student revision on reading passages about which a piece of writing is composed, produce a positive effect on writing skill competency of Malaysian ESL

international school students? 2) Do Malaysian ESL writing students who receive teacher-involved revision outperform those who gain peer group revision? 3) To what extent, does teacher-student revision generate a positive effect in writing skill competency of Malaysia ESL international school students? 4) Do Malaysian ESL international school students who involve in peer group revision outperform those with

NO revision in their writing skill competency?

Revision in this study refers to any exchanges of feedback and opinions on a written revision sheet provided to group 1 students and group 2 students only. Group 1 and group 2 students both receive a single revision sheet (see appendix 3) on the reading passage they will write on. Group 1 students will interact with their teacher and will get clarifications, feedback, and explanations from him. Group 2 students will interact with their own peer group members and will receive peer feedback as well as explanations on the same revision sheet while group 3 students will gain NO revision sheet at all.

2. Literature Review

There has been a heated debate on the role of teacher revision and feedback in the field of second language writing research. There are people who believe in giving corrective feedback to students to improve their written accuracy and those who do not (Guetta, 2007). Ferris (1999, 2004) criticized the strong claim held by Truscott (1996, 2004) against grammar feedback and maintained that "it would certainly be premature to formulate any conclusions about this topic" (Ferris, 2004, p. 49) as existing research does not adequately address the issue whether grammar feedback is beneficial to L2 student writers or not. If we consider the role of teacher feedback

from the perspective of learners, their views tend to be unanimously for the pedagogical practice of teacher feedback. According to Leki (1991), grammar feedback is viewed as helpful by college level ESL students. Hyland expressed a similar view that grammar feedback can serve as guidance for eventual writing development as far as students are concerned (2003).

Lee (1997) obtained similar results by investigating the performance of ESL college students in Hong Kong: Students corrected more errors when the errors were underlined than errors were slighted indicated or with no indication at all. One of our recent studies (Li & Sun submitted) revealed a gain in formal accuracy in the use of the mixed type of unreal conditional when Chinese college students received indirect teacher feedback. Our study suggested that teacher feedback relevant to a linguistic form focused in revision tasks could be useful in bridging the gap between interlanguage and the target language. Further, indirect feedback in the form of underlining linguistic errors together with classroom instruction seemed to be more desirable than indirect feedback alone. However, it remained unclear whether this effect would last.

However, in many Malaysian international school English classrooms, student self or peer-revision has not been integrated with the provision of teacher feedback and instructions for some practical reasons. So, we do not know whether teacher-integrated revision would be beneficial to international student writers compared to peer group revision.

This study is intended to investigate the effective role of teacher-student revision which engulfs teacher direct and indirect feedback and instructions versus student self, peer, and NO revision in the increase of writing skill competency (if any) of international school students in Malaysia. In particular, it is designed to determine the effect of teacher –integrated revision compared to other types of it, on the writing skill competency of international school students in Malaysia.

3. Research Methodology

Forty-eight students studying in the International Islamic School served as participants. In other words, almost all students of grade 5 in three class sections of 5IN (15 participants), 5IS(16 participants), and 5IK(17 participants) participated in the experiment. Since the target participants were only 5th graders of the said international school, the researcher used all the population as the research participants without administering sampling. The participants come from diverse nationalities, races, cultures, ethnicity, and English language backgrounds. They had all past four years of formal education and were in the middle of

Semester 2, and the end of term 3 of their study in grade 5. The International Islamic School which is situated in Batu 8, Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia had an enrolment of around 1,000 students from diverse countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Iran, Iraq, and so forth and benefited the British national Curriculum accompanied by its series of textbooks namely Developing Fiction Skills and Developing Non-fiction Skills books for the English subject. The English language is the only medium of instruction and communication school wide and is taught as a second language. Participants are almost non-native English speaking students with the exception of three participants who are American, Canadian, and British. There were only three class sections of grade 5 who total 52 students. It needs to note that four students were set aside from the research for they were absent on the day the reading passage (pages 76-77, Unit 10, 'Developing Fiction Skills' book, British National Curriculum) were taught by their ESL teacher who is the same as the researcher. Therefore, the total number of the participants is 48. Each class section of grade 5 takes the English subject seven periods per week and English is a mainstream subject. Students practise writing once a week. Ages of the participants ranged between 9 to 12.

4. Design

Quasi-experimental design in general is the research design for this study. As the word 'quasi' means 'as if' or 'almost', so a quasi-experiment means almost a true experiment. In the other words, all students in the three 5th grade classes have been selected as participants through a non-random procedure. On the other hand, this investigation has benefited the mechanism of random assignment to groups. This means the selection and labelling of treatment group one, treatment group two, and control group took place randomly which gives rise to probabilistic equivalence.

Due to the fact that the current exploration only deals with post-test, a combination of factorial and post-test designs endeavours to shed enough light on the findings of this investigation. Factorial design is used to test the effects of an independent variable called 'factor' on a single dependent variable. It needs to be noted that exists one single independent variable or factor namely 'revision' in this investigation. According to the theory of factorial design, this factor (revision) subdivides into three levels i.e. peer revision, teacher-student revision, and NO revision. Therefore, there is a factor (revision) which is regarded as a major independent variable. It seems worth looking at the following hierarchical diagram.

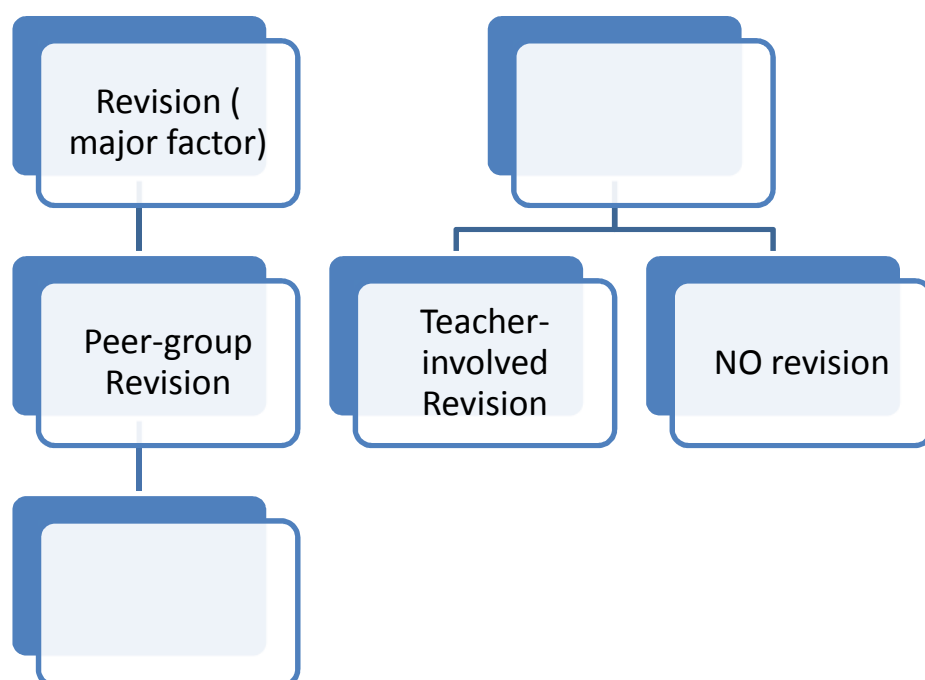


Figure 1 - Hierarchical diagram of factor and levels

Table 1-procedure of the study

Task No.	Activities	Time and Date
Task 1	Teaching two fiction stimulating passages to each grade 5 class section for 80 minutes	80 minutes (Monday 21,2,2011)
Task 2	Announcing a writing quiz on the whiteboard	(Monday 21,2,2011)
Task 3	Providing 5IS and 5IN participants an identical revision sheet followed by administering two types of revision i.e. teacher-student (for 5IS) and peer group revision (for 5IN) on the two taught stimulus fiction passages right before the quiz	(Thursday 24,2,2011)
Task 4	Random assignment to groups (groups randomization)	(Thursday 24,2,2011)
Task 5	Conducting a writing quiz in which participants are required to develop two paragraphs; a narrative and persuasive paragraphs on either of the two taught stimulating fiction passages.(Post-test)	(Thursday 24,2,2011)

5. Procedures

Before the study, all participants in three class sections were carefully taught two fictional passages from pages 76-77, Unit 10, 'Developing Fiction Skills' book (see appendix 2) free from biasness. Their English teacher, who teaches all the three class sections of grade 5, announced the time and date of the writing quiz, two days in advance verbally as well as by writing on the whiteboard. Students as usual copied the announcement from the board into their own communication book supervised by their English teacher. On the day of the quiz which took place two days after the reading passages had been taught. 5IS and 5IN class sections both received an identical single-paged revision sheet inclusive of main points and highlights of the taught reading passages, approximately half an hour before the quiz. 5IK class section was deprived of the revision sheet. The 5IS participants interacted with their English teacher, discussed, reviewed, and gained teacher's feedback on the

highlights of the revision sheet whereas 5 IN 's just sat in peer groups of four and made their own discussions and exchanges on the revision sheet without getting help from their English teacher who was at attendance in classroom. Later on and before the quiz began, random labelling and assignment to groups took place. Therefore, the class sections '5IS','5IN', and '5IK' in order were labelled and renamed as treatment group1, treatment group2, and control group. A single standardized writing quiz (refer to appendix 3) was conducted in which all the participants in the three groups were required to write two paragraphs. The quiz is a photocopied version from the end of Unit 10 Non-fiction book, on page 81 which is regarded a standard small test since developed in accordance with the British national curriculum. Participants first needed to choose one of the two fiction passages and write two paragraphs on it. Paragraph one should consists of the summary of either of the two fiction passages with the word count of 50 to 70 while paragraph 2 should focus on the participants' opinions on whether they like or dislike the fiction passage supported at least by two reasons. There was no limit in the extent

of paragraph 2. Actually the writing quiz asked the participants to deal with two types of essays i.e. narrative and persuasive. The whole procedure is summarized in table 1 below:

6. Scoring Method

Almost similar to the Cambridge International Primary program (CIPP) scoring system, this investigation has availed of six categories based on which participants quizzes were graded. These categories are composed of a) 'content' which refers to plot, setting, and characterization (3 marks), b) 'style' which is marked with sentence structure and grammar (2 marks), c) 'reasoning' which here means providing two reasonable supports (2 marks), d) 'vocabulary' which is the usage of accurate and fictional/adventurous words (1 mark), e) 'spelling' which is referred to as right spelling (1 mark), and e) 'punctuation' which is the demonstration of correct usage of capital letters, punctuation marks, etc. (1 mark). The

total mark of the quiz is 10. So 10 is the highest and 0 is the lowest score. Each violation, isregard, or mistakes made reduces 0.25 marks from the total mark which is 10.

7. Analyses and results

The data collected from the three groups were presented in table 1. This table reveals that the treatment group 1 who privileged teacher's direct and indirect feedback plus instructions has won the toppest test score of 7.2 chased by the control group who had no access to revision, with the test score of 6.3. The treatment group2 who only dealt with self and peer revision ended up the least mean scorer.

To determine the extent of the effect the only independent variable or factor has on its three sub-levels which are the three groups under study, the below figure can do much illustration.

Table 2-Distribution of descriptive data obtained from the three groups' test

Statistical Variable	Treatment group one	Treatment group two	Control group
Mean	7.2	5.6	6.3
standard deviation	1.8	2.24	2.28
Median	7.5	5.5	6
Mode	8.5	4	7.75
minimum score	3.5	1	1
maximum score	9.25	9.75	9.5

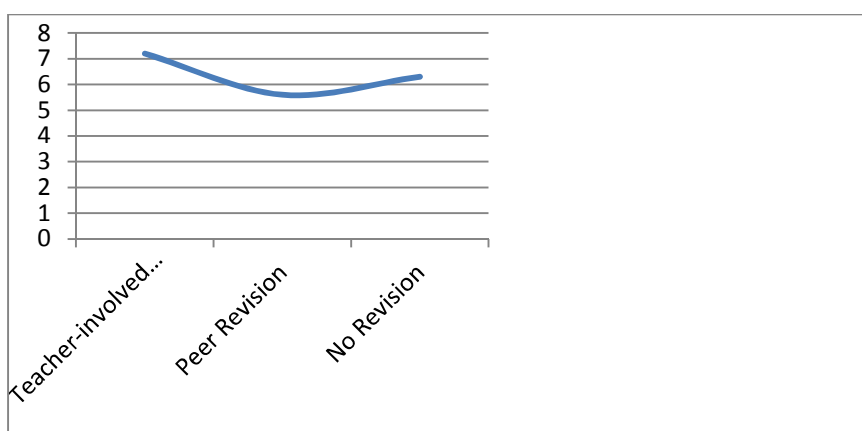


Figure 2-Main Effects of Revision on the three groups

The above figure depicts a soaring line for treatment group 1 which indicated that teachers play a key role in revision. It is apparent that school students always need their teacher's direct or indirect feedback and just leaving the task of revising to self-study or peer group is not advisable. Students are habituated with receiving guidelines and facilitated instructions from their orchestrator i.e. teacher.

When it comes to statistical variables, the arithmetic factor namely 'mean' pops up very quickly. Like many scholars, the investigator believes that subtracting the means of treatment and control group does not suffice. In addition, one should look into some other factors such as mode, median, minimum and maximum, and deviation values as well. In this study, all the above parameters

have received attention. The following figure is worth a glance:

The above depicted figure bravely offers steadfast responses to the research question 1 and 2 which state whether teacher-integrated revision lays any positive effect on the participants' writing test results and whether this group is able to perform better than the peer-grouped revisers. Both answers to these questions are a definite Yes. Carrying out revisions with teachers in the centre as directors and mentors turned out to be more than necessary. The averaged results, the teacher-engaged revision group achieved speaks well of it.

The above figure substantiate the notion that treatment group 1 in terms of mean scoring, has soared high to the percentage of 70.20% with the median and mode of 7.5

and 8.5. The other treatment group (per-revision) has the mean, median, and mode values of 5.6, 5.5, and 4 which are much low as compared to the teacher-involved group. The control group obtained the values of 6.3, 6, and 7.75 for mean, median, and mode which are comparably upper than treatment group 2 and lower than the treatment group 1.

The next figure (figure3) shows the variance or standard deviation among the participants' scores against the mean of each group. Simply, the standard deviation is referred to as noise. Based on the factorial design, the effect (t) come out of the subtraction of two groups means divided by the subtraction of the same two groups standard deviations. So the following formula eases out understanding.

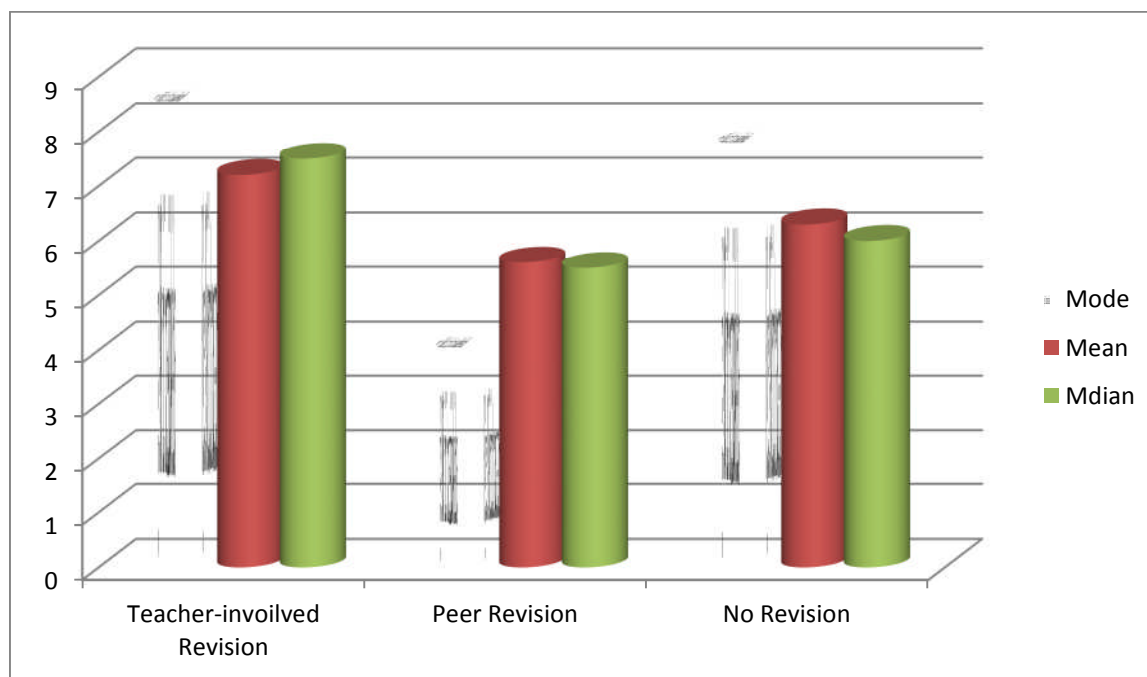
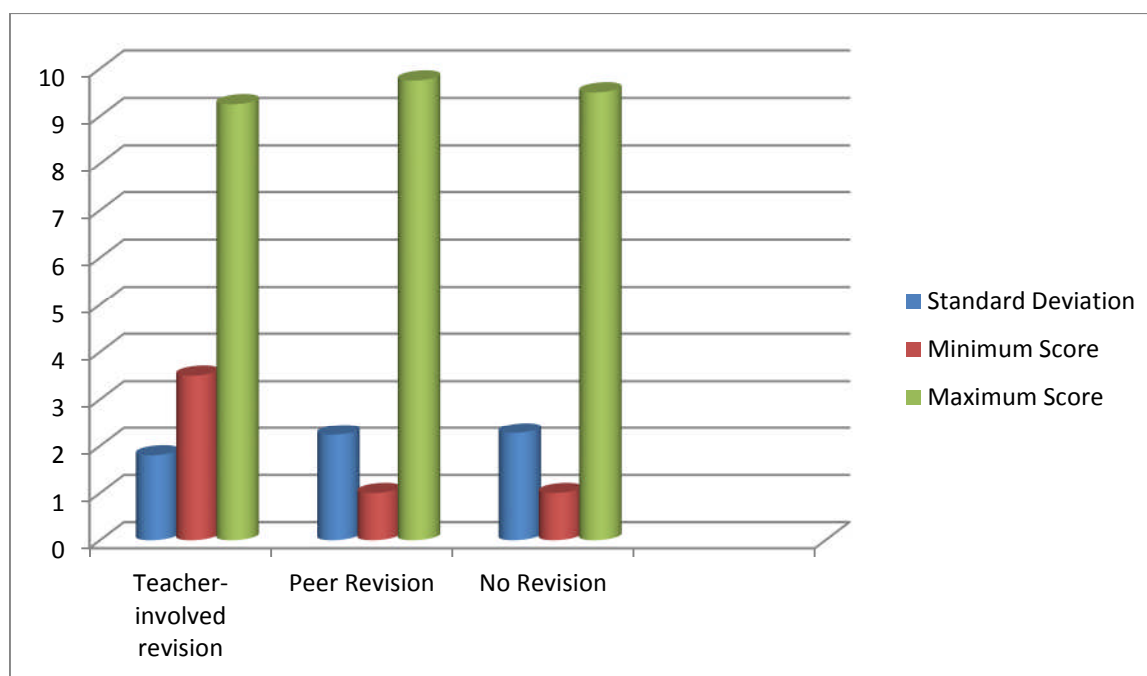


Figure 3- Distribution of some statistical variables



$$t = \frac{(\text{treatment mean} - \text{control mean})}{(\text{treatment deviation} - \text{control standard deviation})}$$

The following figure illustrates three statistical values. The above figure offers illustration on three statistical parameters. It is now apparent that the value of standard deviation of treatment group1 (teacher-involved revision)

is the lowest one compared to the two others. As a matter of fact, this manifests the best group in terms of the variance and probabilistic variability. In the other words, the scores of participants of this group have proved the closest to the same group mean which is 7.2. These scores are not much spread on the scale of 1 to 10. Comes

next, is the treatment group 2 (peer revision) whose standard deviation is 2.24. The scores of this group are moderately scattered. Finally comes the control group (No revision) with the standard deviation of 2.28 who gained the highest standard deviation which speaks of its broadband variability.

Results of the all above analyses show that when revision steps in, participants in the teacher-involved group perform much better than the other two counterpart groups. This group succeeded to make the highest mean score of 7.2 out of 10 and this result advocates the role of teacher in reading passage revision. Teacher's role and feedback in doing revision plus students' interaction makes an efficient combination. This study analyses have proved that teacher's position and role in revising reading material on which a writing test is administered have a positive effect on the results of writing tests. Furthermore, standard deviation does work miracles in the favour of teacher-integrated revision. Letting students sit in peer groups in order to do revision on their own and without teacher's interaction and interference has a very little effect on the results of the writing test as far as 'null case' is concerned. A null case is a hypothetical notion used in factorial design. A null case is a situation where the treatments have no effect. It is assumed that even if we didn't give the training we could expect that students would score a 5 on average on the outcome test. So the null case score is fixed on 5 in a 1-10 score scale. Now it is clear that the peer revision group has not made any remarkable performance as compared to the null value.

Compared to the control group writing result mean (6.3), the peer group has performed poorer (5.6). The drawbacks could be found in misguiding, misunderstanding, lack of sufficient invested time, playfulness, childishness, lack of teacher's feedback, lack of professional correction and problem shooting. Therefore, participants in the peer revision group failed to exhibit a significant result outcome. Teacher-integrated revision generated the best effect on the results of a writing test on a reading passage. Teacher-involved revision group outperformed the peer group as well as No revision group. Teacher-involved group's successful results have overtaken peer group and NO revision group. Teacher-involved group has left the two other groups exhausting behind for 1.6 (7.2 - 5.6) and 0.9 (7.2-6.3) miles in a 10-mile cross-country run.

8. Summary and Discussion

In light of the results presented above, four major findings emerged from the study:

1. Revision with teacher as a central core and when participants received direct and/or indirect feedback, instructions, and interaction improved the results of a writing test on a reading passage taught before. Hence the response to the first research question which orbits around 'the existence of any positive effects when teacher involves in revision', is an absolute YES.
2. Teacher-involved revision generated a better effect than NO revision and peer revision group on the results of a writing test on a reading passage taught before.

3. Teacher feedback in form of instructions, interaction, correction, and psychologically professional advice generated a positive effect on the results of a writing test on a reading passage taught before. Based on the null hypothesis explained in pervious pages of the study, the positive effect such revision contributes is 2.2 mean scores or 22% upper than the set null hypothesized score of 5 on a 1-10 or 50% on a 1-100% mean score scale.
4. Participants in the peer revision group showed no privilege over No revision group. Unlike the public view, NO revision group outperformed the peer revision group (6.3 vs. 5.6 mean). So such revision when there is no teacher involvement is not worth an attempt. As a result, the findings of this investigation offer a big NO as a response to the research question 4 which inquires if 'the peer revision group outperforms the NO revision group'.

The first three findings, summarized above, suggest a positive role and effect of revision when teacher involves in offering direct and/or indirect feedback, instruction, psychologically educational supports, motivation, correction, and explanations in a Malaysian international school classroom. The last shortened finding outlined above, asserts that carrying out revision without teacher's engagement is almost null and void. Peer revision group has shown a very little improved effect on the results of the writing test conducted on the peer revised reading passage. Participants receiving no revision even performed better on the same writing test. What is more, this study demonstrates that receiving teacher feedback, instruction, and teacher-student interaction is vitally important to the participants. The evidence observed in this study lends support to the current view in SLA which posits that output promotes learners to notice the gap between their interlanguage and the target language, drawing learners to construct a hypothesis about the target form, which will be presented in their follow-up language production, and tested in their following output (Swain & Lapkin 1995). Considering the positive role of revision observed in this study and Chandler's study, it is legitimate to stress the incorporation of revision in reading and writing tasks in Malaysian international school English classrooms.

9. Conclusion

So, to round up the results revealed in this study, this study shows a beneficial role of revision and teacher involvement relevant to the writing test results of international school students in Malaysia. The study clearly shows that receiving teacher feedback, instruction, highlighted tips empowers the international school students in Malaysia so that they can create knowledgeable writing works that definitely boost their writing test results. The outlined concluded points are as follows:

1. Teacher-involved revision can be termed as a goal-oriented thinking process, which a writing student goes through in order to obtain final knowledge and produce an almost flawless writing piece in terms of content,

style, reasoning, spelling, vocabulary, and punctuation.

2. In many international schools in Malaysia, normally, reading revision is not incorporated with classroom writing tasks as it is too time-consuming to consider for classroom practice. So this incorporation might be fruitful.

3. According to the study findings, peer group revision is of little advantage. Thus, it is best to infuse this technique with teacher involvement.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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