

การพัฒนาการได้รับความเชื่อถือของนักเรียนไทยจากการเขียนบล็อก ในวิชาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ

The Development of Thai Students' Ethos on Blogs in English as a Foreign Language Writing Classrooms

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลการใช้บล็อกเพื่อพัฒนาการได้รับความเชื่อถือ (ethos) ของนักเรียนไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างจากการสุ่มแบบเจาะจงคือนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 จำนวน 14 คน จากโรงเรียนสาธิตมหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ ประสานมิตร ฝ่ายมัธยม ภาคเรียนที่ 1 ปีการศึกษา 2514 เครื่องมือในการวิจัยประกอบด้วย 1) แบบทดสอบก่อน และหลังเรียน 2) แผนการสอนเกี่ยวกับการสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือ การประเมินความน่าเชื่อถือ, การเขียนเพื่อจูงใจ และบล็อก จำนวน 5 บทเรียน 3) บล็อกสำหรับงานเขียนเพื่อแสดงความเชื่อถือของนักเรียนไทย 4) มาตรฐานวัดประเมินค่า (rubric) สำหรับประเมินงานเขียนเพื่อจูงใจ 5) มาตรฐานวัดประเมินค่า สำหรับประเมินความน่าเชื่อถือ และ 6) แบบสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มตัวอย่าง วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลทางสถิติจาก ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบน มาตรฐาน และค่า t-test วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพจากคำตอบในการสัมภาษณ์ และข้อมูลจากบล็อก ผลการวิจัยพบว่ากลุ่มตัวอย่างมีระดับความน่าเชื่อถือก่อนและหลังเรียนแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญที่ระดับ .05 นอกจากนี้ผลการวิจัยยังชี้ให้เห็นว่ากลุ่มตัวอย่างมีการใช้กลวิธีการสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือ 3 กลวิธี ได้แก่ รูปลักษณ์ ภาษา และการตรวจสอบงานเขียน สำหรับการใช้นาภาษานั้นพบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างมุ่งเน้นการแสดงการอ้างอิง การให้ตัวอย่าง การให้เหตุผล และการทำให้มั่นใจ เพื่อสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือในงานเขียนของตน

คำสำคัญ: ลักษณะผู้เขียน บล็อก การสอนการเขียนผ่านบล็อก การพัฒนาลักษณะผู้เขียน การเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ

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Abstract

The present study aimed at studying the effects of blogs on ethos development. The participants were 14 grade 12 Thai students, selected via a purposive sampling method, in the first semester of 2014. The instruments included 1) a pre- and post-test, which was a writing assignment, 2) five lessons, 3) three assignments on three blogs, 4) a rubric for evaluating persuasive writing, 5) a rubric for evaluating ethos, and 6) an interview form. The data were analyzed using mean, S.D. and t-test scores. In addition, the participants' answers were coded and analyzed qualitatively. The findings showed that the level of ethos perception in the participants' writing increased significantly from the pretest to the posttest at the level of .05. It was found, in addition, that the participants used three major strategies to build up their ethos: appearance strategies, linguistic strategies, and proofreading strategies, all of which could strengthen the trustworthiness, reliability, and credibility of the writing.

Keywords: ethos, blogging, blogs, development of ethos, EFL writing

Introduction

Writing assessment is always involved with using criteria to grade students' writing. Criteria reflect the approaches employed in the classroom. The approach widely used in the writing classroom is called the "current-tradition rhetoric." According to Broad (2003), American modern writing assessment dates back to the 1960s, when Educational Testing Service (ETS) researchers created a writing rubric that consists of seven main headings, including ideas, style, organization, paragraphing, sentence structure, mechanics, and verbal facility. Their final rubric contained five headings, including ideas, form, flavor, mechanics, and wording. These criteria place much emphasis on linguistic ability and form. In Thailand, where English is regarded as a foreign language,

such value on grammar and form is obvious. For example, in a study in Thailand by Puengpipattrakul (2013), the main criteria in what was called "three-genre rubrics" were content, organization, mechanics, grammar, and paraphrasing. Kaewcha (2010)'s study, too, focuses on language and form. It examined the relationship between coherence and writing qualities such as mechanics, organization, word choice, and content. These are just two out of many studies that circle around the current-traditional approach. If we survey English curricula in English departments in universities nationwide, we see, too, that they, for the biggest part, value form and linguistic competence.

Writing assessment under current-traditional paradigm emphasizes language



ability and thus does not reflect the true nature of writing. Crowley (1998) bluntly states that current-traditional rhetoric is purely “arhetorical” (p. 286). This teaching approach emphasizes correctness, arrangement, and style (Kaewnuch, 2009). It also considers the main modes of discourse (exposition, description, narration, and argument) as separate from each other, unable to be combined (Crowley, 1990, as cited in Kennedy, 1998). In other words, it does not consider audience, purpose, occasion, and exigency as important elements of writing. The writing produced by students, therefore, cannot effectively serve its real-life function, which is communication.

The main goal of teaching English in the Thai context, however, is to help students communicate effectively with native speakers of other languages (Ministry of Education, 2002). This goal should be reflected in the English as a foreign language (EFL) writing classroom. To incorporate this goal means that we need to incorporate other skills other than form and language ability. Our students’ writing should not be just artifacts for demonstrating writing ability, but it should show their understanding of how to communicate in real ways. Student writers need to be taught to think about the audience, purpose, occasion, and exigency of a specific writing task and apply them in their writing. Those are necessary skills. Yet, there are still other writing qualities valued by writing teachers, such as ethos, logos,

pathos, voice, subjectivity, power, agency, and so on that we do not talk about in the EFL writing classroom.

Ethos was first mentioned by Aristotle in the ancient Greek, translated into English as “character” (Campbell, 1995). It was one of three words (ethos, logos, and pathos) Aristotle indicated as three major appeals of public speaking. Logos refers to the use of logic to convince the listener. Pathos refers to the emotion conveyed mostly to obtain sympathy from the listener. Ethos means the speaker’s character (Fahnestock, 2012). McCrosky and Teven (1999), Cooper (1932), and Hovland, Jenis, and Kelly (1953) believe that ethos, among the three appeals, increases persuasive effectiveness the most.

As ethos refers to the person’s character, its perception depends on how the person behaves and on his or her social status. Campbell (1995) and Ramages and Bean (1998) focus on its ethical side, claiming that a person can appeal to others with ethics he holds. In other words, a person considered to violate ethics or to lack it loses his ethos. In writing, ethos usually refers to the writer’s credibility, authority, and trustworthiness (Devitt, Reiff, & Bawarshi, 2004). To say it another way, in order for the reader to believe the writer, the writer must show that he is credible, trustable, and knowledgeable. A lot of times, the writer’s credibility and trustworthiness come from the writer’s social position, from his or her



education level, from his or her job. A lot of times, the level of ethos increases via the mentioning of direct experiences, the use of secondary sources, and even the carefulness in typing and decorating of the page.

Therefore, to be successful in speaking or in writing, the speaker or the writer needs to make the listener or reader feel his presence or existence. Ethos, according to Campbell (1995), is the writer's or the speaker's presence and audience orientation. Such a demand corresponds to the present understanding in the process and post-process approaches that writing is situational and rhetorical. Scholars such as (Burton, 1998) and Dlugan (2010) believe that ethos can be situated or invented. To invent ethos, Kennedy, Kennedy, Muth, and Holladay (2005) suggest that the writer "use a tone and approach that appeal to [the] reader's sense of fairness and reasonableness, spell out [his] values and beliefs, and acknowledge values and beliefs of others with different opinions, establish [his] credentials, if any, and the credentials of experts [he cites] and instill confidence in [his] readers so that they see [him] as a caring, trustworthy person with reliable views" (p.147).

Finally, apart from looking at ethos as an individual quality, it is useful to consider it in relation to other qualities. The relation of ethos with others may be explained by drawing a diagram. In *What we really value*, Broad (2003) draws such a diagram, which

presents ethos as a major constellation, and ethos itself means "writer as a person" (p. 37). In the ethos constellation, ethos is thought to be felt through the tone, style, dialect, and diction of the writing, through the writer's sincerity, honesty, innocence, voice, and personality, and through characteristics such as being mature, arrogant, and distance.

In the diagram, the constellation of ethos overlaps that of agency/power. This means that we can analyze it in relation to these two terms, and that some qualities denoting agency and power also denote ethos. Phrases that describe power and agency include, for example, tight, minimalist, show not tell, competent, know how to write, take charge, serious, goals, and control. Agency may be defined simply as "the presence of the self," and power as "the force that can change or motivate others" (see Kaewnuch, 2008). It may be said, as a result, that ethos is intermediate between these two terms, or the combination of them, because ethos consists of the self and the power to persuade.

The present study relates the development of ethos with using blogs. There are some reasons for this. First, blogging is a natural learning of language and, outside the classroom, is the real use of writing, in which the writer and the reader exchange information in real situations. Thus, blogging moves away from the teaching that overemphasizes grammar and form.



Second, blogging is close to the post-process approach, which aims at teaching writing in the public sphere (McComisky, 2010; Weisser, 2002). Blogs, according to Robertson (2009), are appropriate for Gen 2.0 children as they allow them to communicate fast, easily, and individually. Unlike studying in the traditional way where the teacher shadows over the student, students studying with blogs feel confident in expressing themselves. As they write, therefore, they develop their understanding about how writing works, that is, about what adjustments should be made to communicate effectively.

What is more important and more related to this study, however, is that blogging can develop ethos. Smith (2008) points out that blogs contribute to expressing voice as well as learning academic skills. That is, blogs help develop linguistic fluencies and also strategies to handle with discourses and their rules. Blogs, Smith insists, help students to imagine how they might use the arenas that access in different and critical ways. Blogs, thus, empower inexperienced writers. In addition, blogs can develop writers' characters. For instance, they can develop democratic views (Bloch & Crosby, 2006; Nelson & Fernhirmer, 2003). From these studies, it is obvious that blogs can develop students' ethos.

The researcher, however, complicated the study by incorporating the use of blogs

not only to follow the communicative function of writing of the present worlds but also to catch up the current trends of the process and post-process approaches. Blogs are a technology that allows writers to notice the adjustment of writing to fit real-life purposes.

Objectives

1. To investigate the effects of blogs on the development of the students' ethos.
2. To study the development of students' ethos on blogs over time through sequential tasks.

Methodology

The participants were 14 grade 12 students at Srinakharinwirot Prasarnmit Demonstration School, selected via a purposive sampling method, who took a writing class (Advanced English Reading and Writing 5) with the researcher in the first semester of 2014, and who had passed some English writing courses and had had some experience in paragraph writing and peer reviews. The participants consisted of 4 males and 10 females, 17-18 years of age.

The instruments included 1) a pre- and post-test, which was a writing assignment on the same topic, 2) five lessons on ethos, ethos evaluation, persuasive writing, and blogging, 3) three assignments designed for the participants to express ethos on three blogs, 4) a rubric for evaluating persuasive writing, 5) a rubric for



evaluating ethos, and 6) an interview form.

The steps taken to conduct the research included the following. All the instruments were created and checked by specialists for validity. The pretest was given to the participants in the first period before the first lesson. For 14 weeks, the researcher taught ethos and ways to achieve it, and during those weeks, the participants wrote three blogs on three topics trying to display ethos. The researcher collected the final draft of each blog. In addition, at the end of each blog, the researcher interviewed students about how they had constructed ethos. Three raters were then trained before they were asked to rate ethos in the pre-test, the three final drafts and the post-test. Finally, the researcher analyzed the findings from the interview and the raters and wrote the research report.

To answer the research questions, two rubrics were used to present quantitative findings. The first rubric, adopted from Foster (2004), was used to evaluate participants' persuasive writing in the pre-test and post-test. The second rubric was used to evaluate participants' ethos in the pre-test and post-test and also in all participants' final drafts of all three blogs. The data were analyzed by means, percentages, standard deviations, and two tailed t-test dependent.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was also used to find out the correspondence among three raters and to find the relationship between persuasive writing and ethos from the post-test. In addition, a qualitative method was used to investigate how the participants understood and displayed ethos. The qualitative data came from the second part of the second rubric (the part wherein the raters gave comments and examples of ethos they found in the participants' writing) and the interview. All the expressions from the three raters were listed, categorized, and discussed while the data from all the interviews were coded, categorized, and discussed (see Strauss and Corbin, 1988).

Findings

The participants' ethos increased over 14 weeks and a relationship between persuasive writing and ethos was found in the post-test. Table 1 showed that the participants' ethos in the post-test increased significantly at the level of .05. Similarly, the participants' persuasive writing score in the post-test increased significantly at the level of .01. In addition, the findings showed a .05 level of correlation between the score of ethos and the score of persuasive writing in the post-test.

**Table 1** Average score of students from pre-test and post-test (N=14)

Writing Analysis	Total score	pre test	S.D.	post test	S.D.	t	df	p
Ethos	12	7.2	1.3	8.3	1.2	2.6*	13	.02
Writing	20	9.9	1.8	12.9	2.7	4.4**	13	.00

*p< .05 **p< .01

2. The participants' ethos developed after they took the lessons and experienced their friends' blogs and feedbacks. The development was due to three strategies: appearance strategies, linguistic strategies, and proof-reading strategies.

2.1 Appearance and reference strategies

Table 2 showed that the participants used visuals or reference information to earn

credibility or support their writing, which in turn helps increase their ethos in the second blogs and third blogs. Eight of fourteen students (57.14%) did not use any visuals or references in the first blogs because they were not aware of its importance on blogging. After they learned more about ethos and knew the criteria for assessing ethos from the rubric for evaluating ethos, all participants used references in the second and third blogs.

Table 2 Reference use on blog (N=14)

Reference use	Blog1	Blog2	Blog3	Total
Yes	6	14	14	34
No	8	0	0	8

Testimonies from the interviews coincided with the result in Table 2. The participants indicated increased awareness of the importance of references from the first blog to the third blog. Thus, in blog 1, some participants said, for example, "I don't know how to do it," "I forgot about using pictures," and "I think using references on

blog is unnecessary." In Blog 2, some said, "I used pictured just as the teacher advised but I couldn't add any references because I didn't know how to do it," "I used some references, but I did it, and "My friend taught me to add pictures." In Blog 3, some said "I learned from my friend," "I copied the way my friend posted pictures on blogs," and "I used



pictures and VDOs to support my writing.” The data from the interview showed that all participants added more pictures in their last blogs after they had learned from their peers to add pictures and to decorate their blogs with pictures, images, and various letter fonts.

2.2 Linguistic strategies

The participants used nine linguistic

strategies to build up ethos, as shown in Table 3, but the ones that increased through all three blogs included references, examples, reasons and assertions. The verbal expressions, which the raters, based on the rubric for evaluating ethos, found in all final blogs, were categorized into three criteria (trustworthiness, reliability, and credibility) and are shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3 Numbers of linguistic expressions

Ethos	Type of expressions	Blog1	Blog2	Blog3	Total
Trustworthiness	Reference*	3	8	11	
	Example*	3	6	6	
	Reason*	6	9	10	
Reliability	Reader Engagement	2	1	2	
	Supposition	4	3	6	
	Illustration	13	15	10	
Credibility	Imperative	1	5	3	
	Assertion*	1	2	5	
	Suggestion	2	9	6	

* Note the increases of references, examples, reasons, and assertions from Blog 1 to Blog 3.

2.3 Proof-reading strategies

The participants did not realize the importance of feedbacks until they learned and practiced leaving comments on their classmates' blogs. Increased awareness of the importance is noticeable from what the participants said. In Interview 1, some participants said, “I wrote it and then posted my writing immediately” and “There were some mistakes but I didn't know about them. I need feedbacks from friends.” In Interview 2, some indicated, “I used a dictionary because I felt ashamed,” “I checked it carefully,” and “I try my best to check spelling and grammar.”

In Interview3, some said, “I checked spelling carefully,” and “I'm careful of using capital I.”

The participants started to be aware of the importance of proofreading. In the first blogs, they corrected their writing after getting feedbacks from the teacher and their friends, but they started to correct their errors by themselves in the second blogs and third blogs. The number of participants doing this rose from none in Blog 1 to 9 in Blog 2 and 8 in Blog 3. In brief, self-corrections became a strategy they employed to enhance their ethos.



Discussion

The traditional instruction and assessment of writing falls into the psychometric paradigm and has mostly clung to objectivity and reliability, to things that can objectively be assessed and measured. For example, the knowledge of grammar can be indicated through the number of errors produced or points earned in tests. Whether the writer starts with a topic sentence, or whether he uses transitions correctly, can be counted.

The assessment of ethos, on the other hand, depends for the most part on subjectivity, on the opinion of the rater. Although in this study the counts of expressions showing ethos might not have been as accurate as counts of the right or wrong use of grammatical rules due to raters' disagreements, the use of the two rubrics by three raters has shown the growth of ethos from one time to another, as exhibited in Table 1. Rubrics objectify Abstractness into points for the ease of evaluation or counts, which can in turn constitute a picture of a quality in focus. We may say, thus, the assessment of an Abstract textual quality is no different from that of grammatical rules.

However, there are two points to think about when assessing such an Abstract textual quality as ethos. First, our assessment cannot be as reliable and just as the assessment of, say, grammar. The assessment of a subjective quality could be viewed to be unreliable. This study, for example, made use

of three raters to look for signs of ethos in the participants' writing based on a rubric. It is yet doubtful if such an evaluation is reliable because in reality raters vary in opinion and a sign usually has a different meaning in a different context. We need to accept arguments against us concerning the unreliability of our assessment. The best way seems to be that raters are trained. In addition, teachers who assess writing this way must be experienced, and they must be creative. For example, the teacher may feel that a supposition (If you do this, you will...), as in Table 3, signifies that the writer is experienced, so what he says is reliable. Second, it takes time and careful consideration to assess an Abstract textual quality. The use of imperatives in Table 3, for instance, can give a feeling to some that the writer has authority or knowledge about something, and as a result the writer sounds reliable. What should be added to this point is that our assessment of such an Abstract quality as ethos considers data from more than one source. For example, the testimonies collected after each block completion, as exemplified after Table 2, help make sure that the participants' ethos gradually increased from Blog 1 to Blog 3.

As for the image of ethos by the participants in this, the scores of ethos in Table 1 show an overall increase of ethos. The scores of persuasive writing show that the higher ethos a writer expresses, the better ability in persuasive writing he has.



The scores of ethos and persuasive writing, however, indicate only that correlation, or coexistence. They do not describe the characteristic or appearance of ethos. The participants' ethos starts to be visible in Table 3, where ethos is expressed in three major qualities: trustworthiness, reliability, and credibility. Table 3 shows sub-qualities or strategies expressing those words. Through the use of those strategies, we begin to see the writer with ethos is seen to be reliable, trustable, and credible. Table 3, in addition, shows that to achieve ethos, the writer must try to, for instance, use reasons, engage readers with polite, comfortable words, or fully explain something. The writer, the person with ethos, thus, could be viewed as a reasonable, soothing, and compromising person. Finally, Table 3 also shows that there are more strategies for displaying reliability than credibility and trustworthiness.

The findings of the present study, however, have raised an important question, "Can ethos be investigated through qualities other than credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness?" The dynamic map by Broad (2003: 39) shows that a textual quality can be viewed as subsuming or overlapping other textual qualities. The diagram shows there are many qualities housed in the ethos constellation, which yet overlaps the power/agency constellation. In brief, we do not have to look at ethos only through the three terms credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness. Wilbers (1995) informed that

ethos is the writer's credibility and reputation as a qualified, experienced, well informed, and knowledgeable person, so we can focus on these qualities. It, thus, may be concluded that a subjective assessment is plausible, but that a direction or content of the assessment must be valid, truly related to the target.

Teaching Implications and Conclusion

To think about how we should teach writing based on the findings of this study, it is interesting first of all to consider how ethos have been assessed, or might be assessed, in the major approaches in the field of Composition. In current-traditional rhetoric, the product approach which focuses on grammar and form, ethos can be assessed from the directness, straightforwardness, and correctness of the writing. As James Pette (2010) and Kies (2012) indicate, reliability, which constitutes ethos, is manifested, among other things, through the order of ideas, the placing of a topic sentence, and the correct word choice and spelling. In the process approach, the instruction liberates the student and encourages strategies that would help the writer to meet the reader's expectation (McComisky, 2010; Murray, 1997). In other words, in the process approach the writer is the real owner of the writing and is not influenced in any way by the teacher. The findings in the present study show that when the environment is made appropriate, students can develop their



ethos. In the post-process approach, the purpose of the teaching is mainly to understand how writing really works in the public, that is, how writing affects readers. The present study has shown that the participants, though having had just a little practice, began to understand how their writing affected others and started to use different strategies to shape their writing in a way they want.

The teaching ethos, however, is unlike the teaching of grammar and guidelines to organize paragraphs and essays that is common in the product, current-traditional approach, wherein the teacher can rightly identify and count errors and mistakes. The present study shows that we need to objectify an Abstract textual quality before assessing it. For instance, the present study has used to three qualities (trustworthiness, credibility, reliability) to grasp ethos, which can be viewed as following current-traditional assessment. The only difference is that it does not focus on form and grammar any longer. In the process approach, ethos

is developed through the steps involved in the writing process, and also through increased awareness of how the writing gradually shapes and affects readers. In the post-process approach, ethos is expressed in the decoration and use of sources and writer's own expertise in order to achieve the three criteria. In addition, in the present study the use of blogs helps fulfill the demand of the post-process approach by making the participants feel that writing is real, is two-way communication (Prensky, 2007).

In final words, the teaching and assessing of post-process criteria, such as voice, power, and rhetorical understanding is plausible, but they should be conducted as exemplified by the teaching and assessing of ethos in this study. The present shows a combination of all three major approaches. It could be an ideal because it does not depart from the traditional approach, which is strong in its grammar and academic emphases, but still includes true natures of writing. The teaching and assessing of ethos should, therefore, adopt all the three approaches.

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