HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL BELIEFS IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE WRITING INSTRUCTION

TRUONG MINH HOA

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam – ngut_minh_hoa@yahoo.com.vn

PHAM VU PHI HO

Van Hien University, Vietnam - phamvuphiho@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Writing in a foreign language is deemed to be the most difficult language skill to learners, especially at high school level. Consequently, its teaching has become a challenging task for high school teachers in the Vietnamese context. Teacher beliefs related literature indicates that what teachers do in the classroom is directly governed by what they think and believe. Thereby, the current study adopted features of a survey research design to examine the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) high school teachers' beliefs about writing and its teaching. A sample of seventy six EFL teachers from the eight selected high schools situated in Ho Chi Minh City was recruited for the current survey. The beliefs of EFL writing instruction of these teachers were elicited through two instruments of eighteen–item questionnaires and semi–structured interviews. Then the questionnaires were quantitatively analyzed and the interviews were qualitatively analyzed. Results of the study showed that most of the participants held different orientations about writing skill, teacher roles and its teaching. The study was closed by a brief conclusion of key findings.

Keywords: EFL Writing Instruction; High School; Teacher Beliefs.

1. Introduction

In learning a foreign language, learners are subjected to four skills in a natural order of acquisition namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. And the last, writing, is deemed to be the most difficult language skill to be acquired (Mekki, 2012) requiring "the mastery of a variety of linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural competencies" (Barkaoui, 2007). According to Mekki (2012), one of the main reasons for difficult acquisition of writing skill is that students and teachers still believe that students' good writing ability mainly results from their attainments of the language and its text forms but ignore specific steps and collaborative strategies. It can be inferred that in order to master writing skill, not only do language learners need linguistic knowledge since "with linguistic knowledge students often struggle to produce a cohesive piece of writing" (Uddin, 2014), but they should also grasp social awareness of the

writing contexts (Khanalizadeh and Allami, 2012) and cognitive awareness of a specific writing process (Hyland, 2003).

Since the academic year of 2013–2014, writing a free paragraph to answer a given topic has been called for in the English paper of the National GCSE examination in the Vietnamese context. Ironically, the results of these papers were mainly around between 2.0 and 3.5 points. Essentially, these unexpected scores originate from the fact that a large number of high school candidates either did not know how to construct the text or skipped their writing section, which holds twenty percent of the whole English paper (TuoitreOnline, 2015). Surprisingly, this problem also recurred in the academic year of 2015–2016. Some students said they found writing section really difficult. In addition, others admitted that the habit of rote learning sample texts given by the teachers makes them unable to write well when there are

some small changes in the topic. In fact, most high school students do not have any strategies for composing texts independently but normally practice writing in a controlled way. This tallies with what Khanalizadeh and Allami (2012) described about writing teaching and learning in Iran, "writing skill is often limited to making sentences, and the grammatical points of those sentences are the most important parts of learning how to write". Moreover, Tran Thi Ly (2007) raised her voice that writing skill has been conducted in the Vietnamese classrooms as "an individual activity with the teacher as the sole audience and the students are quite quiet". Such low results of writing section in National GCSE examination in recent years have proved that writing is a "difficult, sophisticated, social activity and an important skill for language learners" (Mekki, 2012).

To help learners develop such a sophisticated skill like writing, it is obvious that "teachers are one of the key factors in delivering instruction that leads to the development of competent literacy learners, [...] to be pivotal in influencing students' literacy achievement" (Kraayenoord, Miller, Moni and Jobling, 2009). In other words, teachers' tutorial may have explicit effects on writing performance of their students (Nguyen Ho Hoang Thuy, 2009). As teachers play a critical role in developing learners' writing performance, their pedagogical beliefs have also become a key issue in education since "what they believe as well as what they do not believe have powerful influence on their classroom behaviors" (Le Van Canh, 2011). This may originate from the view that "teachers are active, thinking decision–makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex practically–oriented, personalized, and context–sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003). Therefore, Richards, Gallo and Renandya (2001) posit that "in order to understand how

teachers approach their work, it is necessary to understand the beliefs and principles they operate from".

In the field of writing instruction, researchers have recently shown an increased interest in exploring how teachers think, feel and perceive about the nature of writing, their teacher roles and teaching orientations in classrooms (e.g., Farrell, 2006; Khanalizadeh and Allami, 2012; Abadi and Marzban, 2012; Melketo, 2012; Corpuz, 2011; Uddin, 2014; Gaitas and Martins, 2015). However, research on the realm of teachers' belief system of teaching EFL writing skills at high school level is still miniature and attracts little attention in Vietnam (Le Van Canh, 2011).

Given the fact that high school teachers' beliefs play a pivotal role in helping them adjust their current teaching behaviors to increase students' stable achievement in EFL writing skill, this study seeks to investigate what beliefs the Ho Chi Minh City selected high school teachers hold about the importance and nature of writing, as well as their roles and orientations to teaching writing at high school level. Accordingly, the study posed the following question:

What pedagogical beliefs do the teachers at selected high schools hold in terms of nature of writing, teacher roles, and teaching act?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

All participants of this study were in–service English teachers from eight (8) selected public high schools in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam *(see Table 1 for details)*. However, there were only 76 responders to the questionnaires making the real sample size seventy six (N=76). Specially, most of the participants were female teachers (63/76). Their ages varied between 22 and above 50 years old, and roughly one–third of them were low experienced teachers (22/76) with only from 1 to 5 years in service.

Table 1

The Pedagogical Settings and Number of Participants

High School Name	Address	Established Year	Number of Participants	
			Male	Female
Duong Van Duong	39 Street No. 6, Nha Be District	2012		5
Phuoc Kien	63 Dao Su Tich, Nha Be District	2010	1	6
Nguyen Thi Dinh	Street No. 41, District 8	2004	2	6
An Lac	319 Kinh Duong Vuong, Binh Tan District	1974	2	10
Han Thuyen	37 Dang Van Ngu, Phu Nhuan District	1989	3	10
Tenloman	8 Tran Hung Dao, District 1	1950	2	9
Tran Khai Nguyen	225 Nguyen Tri Phuong, District 5	2006	3	11
Long Thoi	280 Nguyen Van Tao, Nha Be District	2011	1	5
		Total	14	62

2.2. Research design

The study employed survey research design to collect data for the research question. The study used quantitative data collected from 76 copies of questionnaire and then, qualitative data of 5 interview results to explain and interpret the quantitative data. Specifically, the researcher employed the 18–item questionnaire to gather data on teachers' beliefs in EFL writing instruction at the selected public high schools in Ho Chi Minh City. To uncover the information beyond the pencil–and–paper method, it was necessary to interview some teachers in the sample. This combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods helped to assure triangulation, "the process of collecting data from several different sources or in different ways in order to provide a fuller understanding of a phenomenon" (Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

2.3. Data collection and analysis procedure

Questionnaire: First, a consent form was sent to English division leaders of selected high schools to ask for their permission and to assure ethical considerations. Then,

questionnaires in Vietnamese version were distributed to 76 participants. On the receipt of questionnaires from the responders, the researcher checked their validity to make sure all 18 items were adequately responded and no copies had the same response for all 18 given items. Finally, all answers to the 18–item questionnaires were entered into Excel and imported into SPSS version 20.0 for quantitative analysis.

Interview: After completing questionnaire treatment, the researcher contacted the teachers again and five of them agreed to participate in the interviews. The interviews were conducted in a quiet room using a set of semi–structured questions to ask and a tape recorder to record the interviewees' answers. Then, the researcher carried out transcription, "the process of converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data" (Creswell, 2012). Finally, the researcher used manual analysis method suggested by Creswell (2012) reading the text data and using color coding to mark segments of the text, and categorized them into the themes of the research question such as nature of writing, teacher roles, and teaching act.

3. Findings and Discussion

Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data were used to answer the research question. For quantitative analysis, the descriptive statistics as Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) from the questionnaires were run. Alternatively, qualitative data from the semi–structured interviews were theme–based analyzed to provide further information for the descriptive statistics. The responses of the teachers to the questionnaire item were scrutinized according to the five agreement levels based on the following rating scales: *1.00–1.80: strongly disagree; 1.81–2.60: disagree; 2.61–3.40: moderately agree; 3.41–4.20: highly agree; 4.21–5.00: strongly agree.*

3.1. Teachers' Beliefs about Nature of Writing at High School

Calderhead (1996, cited in Yin, 2006) suggests that "each subject area within the school curriculum tends to be associated with a range of beliefs concerning what the subject is about, what it means to know the subject". Found in the existing body of literature, nature of writing is variously defined according to different perspectives. In fact, "teachers can have very limited to very eclectic views of their subject and that in some cases their ideas about subjects vary from one context to another" (Calderhead, 1996, in Yin, 2006). In other words, depending on each specific schooling context, language teachers hold their beliefs about the subject matter ranged from dominant to multiple. Similarly, teachers may hold different perspectives about the nature of writing/ learning writing in the realm of writing instruction at high schools. In brief, teachers' beliefs about the nature of writing play an important role in defining which appropriate teaching orientations they may use to build up students' writing ability.

Table 2

Teachers' Beliefs about Nature of Writing at High School

Item	Nature of writing	N	M	SD
1	Writing is a form–based activity	76	4.33	.74
2	Writing is a cognitive process–based activity	76	3.97	.83
3	Writing is a functional social–based activity	76	4.21	.72
4	Writing is an interactive social–based activity	76	3.62	1.11
Valid N (Listwise)		76		

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents highly favored writing at high school as a form–based activity with the highest extent (Item 1; M= 4.33; SD= .74). Consistently, the interviews produced results which corroborate the findings of the questionnaires. For examples, highly believing in the form–based act of writing, teacher B elaborated that:

> *Writing at high school means that students must write sentences with grammatical correctness; simultaneously, understand and practice different genres, for examples, a letter or a narrative. This should be necessary since grammar and genre structures are useful devices to convey meanings.*

Most surprisingly, writing as a functional social–based activity was strongly favored by the group of teachers with the second highest extent (Item 3; M= 4.21; SD= .72). While

nature of writing as a form–based activity was most opted by the respondents, which almost focuses on grammar, vocabulary and text structures. It is a positive sign that many of them also believed that writing at high school needs to be purposeful and contextual. It means before writing down ideas, learner writers need to identify they will write for whom (the audience) and what (the purpose). For this, Khanalizadeh and Allami (2012) assume that "every successful text will display the writer's awareness of its context" including the audience and the purpose. Consistent with findings from questionnaires, the results obtained from interviews show the high school teachers are positive about this social nature of writing. For example, teacher D admitted

> *Before writing, students need to identify the purpose of their written text. It may be due to the view that Writing sections in textbook series mandated by MOET introduce different text genres adhered to various goals such as letter of invitation, letter of confirmation, personal narratives, and so on.*

The above table also shows that these teachers considered writing as a cognitive process–based activity (Item 2; M= 3.97; SD= .83). This finding is similar to Uddin's (2014) finding which showed that participants believed student writers should follow several stages of writing such as gathering idea, planning, revising, drafting, etc. when learning to write. Qualitatively, all five interviewees unanimously replied that writing should be a cognitive process at higher level. For instance, teacher A compared the writing process in English and in Vietnamese as follows:

> *Like writing in Vietnamese, writing in English also requires students to master some specific skills; for instances, gathering ideas, outlining, so on and so forth.*

In the same line with the communicative

objectives formulated by Vietnamese MOET (2006) that "…students proactively participate in learning activities and communicative activities creatively and collaboratively…", it is evident from Table 1 that the teachers at selected high schools were quite agree that writing should be an interactive social–based activity at high schools in which students help each other to construct ideas and check linguistic errors (Item 4; M= 3.62; SD= 1.11). Consistently, the interviewees agreed that this collaborative work is necessary for writing in the high school context as what teacher E revealed:

> *If students have opportunities to participate in collaborative activities in pair or groups, they will surely write better. To add one important point, when helping each other to revise the text, these students may play the role of readers; they will check if they understand what other students have written...*

According to Mekki (2012), one of the main reasons for difficult acquisition of writing skill is that many teachers still believe students develop their writing skill through previous knowledge of the language and text forms while do not focus on specific steps and collaborative strategies. However, this study found that teachers' beliefs about the nature of writing are quite positive. Teachers of selected high schools strongly believed that writing should be viewed as a cognitive process and social–based activity though they still considered language accuracy and text structure as main issues of the writing skill. In other words, they perceived writing skill at high school level is not only restricted by separate language and text forms but also summons students cognitive process, functional awareness and collaboration.

Similarly, Schmitt (2010) posits that writing should involve three interrelated elements including relational, strategic, and textual aspects. In term of relational aspect,

writing should be embedded in a particular social situation used to achieve certain communicative goals (functional social–based view). For strategic aspect, writing requires writers to follow the steps such as planning, organizing ideas, and choosing appropriate linguistic features (cognitive process–based view). And, in term of textual aspect, writers are required to use legible discourse features (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, sentence patterns, and text structures) to guarantee coherence and cohesion of writing, helping the readers navigate the meanings of the text (form–based view).

3.2. Teachers' Beliefs about Teacher Roles in Writing Classrooms

According to Richards et al. (2001), teacher belief system can also be reflected through views about teacher roles and how teachers define their work. This pedagogical belief type, which derives from the beliefs about the nature of subject matter and of its learning, is often divided into two different views including knowledge transmission and knowledge construction. In fact, "people hold different conceptual orientations towards the role of teachers" (Zheng, 2009) in spatial and temporal differences.

Table 3

Beliefs about Teacher Roles

Item	Teacher roles	N	M	SD
5	The teacher should primarily perform the role of a knowledge transmitter.	76	4.47	.62
6	The teacher should primarily perform the role of a facilitator.	76	3.18	1.09
7	The teacher should combine the two roles flexibly.	76	4.39	.66
Valid N (Listwise)		76		

The data from Table 3 shows that the teachers widely favored the role of a knowledge transmitter with the highest extent (Item 5; M= 4.47; SD= .62). It is in the same line with what Nguyen Ho Hoang Thuy (2009) suggested when discussing about teaching EFL writing in the Vietnamese context that "language teachers need to provide learners with certain input before asking them to write". She further explained "input drives acquisition, which should be put ahead of teaching in any approach of language instruction that wants to be successful". Accordingly, the researcher thinks that direct transmission of knowledge or provision of comprehensive input (e.g. grammatical items, key expressions, and text structures) when teaching writing is really important, especially for high school students. However, if there are so many learning activities controlled and

directed by the teacher, students may have trouble writing freely, an issue getting more attention in recent new–format examinations.

Yet, Table 3 reveals that the high school teachers did not seemingly believe in the effectiveness of main teacher role as a facilitator in their writing classroom (Item 6; M= 3.18; SD= 1.09). The reason for this ignorance is that teachers are required to conduct several challenging learner–centered tasks to fulfill this role successfully. For examples, they could have students do various writing activities; organize writing activities collaboratively through the use of pair or group work (Harmer, 2001); and create a favorable environment for students to practice writing more (Uddin, 2014). If these activities are successfully fulfilled in the context of high schools, facilitators can motivate students to learn writing and enhance learner autonomy

(Harmer, 2001), thus help to develop their independent writing ability. Nevertheless, these students could hardly learn this productive skill effectively due to a limited curriculum of only 16 45-minute sessions without language input provided by knowledge transmitters. Given the fact that each separate role has its own negative effects, the respondents strongly believed that a combination of these two aforementioned roles could manifest their high school students' writing ability as much as possible (Item 7; M= 4.39; SD= .66). If the teachers use their role flexibly, they can help students acquire language input sufficiently and produce writing output meaningfully and independently. Clearly, in term of teacher roles, the participants did favor a combination of the two perspectives suggested by Chai (2010) including knowledge transmission and knowledge construction. Nevertheless, the role of a knowledge transmitter was still prioritized by these teachers (M $_{knowledge}$ $_{transmitter}$ = 4.47; M $_{both}$ = 4.39). This choice is also found in the interviews. For example, teacher D opined that

In my opinion, I do think both. Foremost, teachers have to provide writing knowledge to their students. For instance, writing components as lexis, syntax, mechanics, and so on; or, various text types such as letter, report, narrative, etc. Then, teachers will facilitate their students to write like organize work arrangements among students. By anyway, teachers at high school should perform the role of knowledge transmitter more than facilitator…

3.3. Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Act

Teaching is a process of inextricably linked components. This process involves the selection and employment of instructional materials, the choice and manipulation of instructional activities, the reference and use of corrective feedback, and the encouragement of students' writing practice. Consequently, the teachers' beliefs about teaching process of writing skill in their high schools are reflected in the above–mentioned components relating to views of the nature of writing.

Table 4

Beliefs about the selection and employment of instructional materials

Item	Instructional Materials	N	M	SD
8	It is sufficient for the teacher to use only the local textbooks compiled by MOET.	76	3.36	.69
9	The teacher should use authentic supplementary materials (e.g. newspaper, letters, stories) besides the local textbooks.	76	4.54	.72
Valid N (Listwise)		76		

The first component of teachers' pedagogical beliefs is the selection and employment of instructional materials, which is an indispensable part of teaching process (Wambui, 2013). From the data of Table 4, many teachers in the study did not agree that only using local textbooks designed by MOET were enough to develop students' writing performances (Item 8; M= 3.36; SD= .69). In the same vein, according to Nguyen Thuy Minh (2007), the activities in "Writing sections" in the textbook series mandated by MOET seem not to target readership and purpose for writing. Thus, it is necessary to

use authentic materials that have been produced to fulfill some social purposes in language community (Peacock, 1997, cited in Berardo, 2006). Expectedly, Table 4 indicates that most teachers positively believed that they should use authentic supplementary materials such as newspaper articles, letters, and videos besides the prescribed textbooks for their writing class (Item 9; M = 4.54; SD = .72). This belief was in agreement with the prescription of MOET (2006) that "…teachers employ supplementary materials to motivate students". Along with the results obtained from the questionnaires, the interview results also show participants' strong agreement on the necessity of using authentic supplementary materials in their writing instruction. For examples, teacher D and teacher E were eager to explain

> *If possible, high school teachers need to use other supplementary materials along with textbook series since this choice may make writing class livelier and more interesting, helping students much engage into writing classes.*
>
> (Teacher D)
>
> *… I believe that these materials may provide different genuine contexts for writing, which make writing more meaningful. I am sure that high school*

students will become motivated to learn writing.

(Teacher E)

These opinions are consistent with Peacock's (1997) belief that the use of suitable authentic materials by the teacher in the language classroom helps motivate students more because these materials are more interesting and inspiring than artificial ones. In fact, using authentic materials in writing instruction brings about some considerable benefits. First, these real–life materials motivate students learn to write more when they are exposed to interesting teaching resources such as audio, visual and printed materials. Furthermore, since these resources are designed for real–life use for interactional and transactional purposes (Maroko, 2010), it is believed that these genuine materials can help students develop an understanding of the social function and communicative purpose of the text to write effectively based on the view of writing as a functional social–based activity. Thereby, high school teachers should be encouraged to employ authentic materials along with textbooks to help their students yield much improvement in their writing ability, including motivation and social awareness of writing text.

Table 5

Beliefs about employment of instructional activities

Item	Instructional Activities	N	M	SD
10	The teacher should study model texts on the basis of linguistic features and genre schematic structures before students write.	76	4.54	.62
11	The teacher should raise students' awareness of social function and purpose of the text.	76	4.21	.81
12	The teacher should guide students the basic steps to compose a text.	76	3.89	.80
13	The teacher should set up collaborative activities among students in pairs or groups.	76	3.74	1.06
Valid N (Listwise)		76		

Table 5 shows that selected participants strongly believe in form–based orientation in teaching writing for high school students (Item 10; M= 4.54; SD= .62) through teachers analyzing model texts on the basis of linguistic features and genre schematic structures before getting their students to write. Positively, functional social–based orientation to teaching writing was highly appreciated by the respondents (Item 11; M= 4.21; SD= .81) when they thought that teacher should raise students' awareness of social function and purpose of the text (e.g., narrating, reporting, etc.). Obviously, the high school teachers still followed traditional beliefs of knowledge transmission view. In this respect, the researcher personally agrees that activities for providing the sample texts and developing students' understanding of social functions of these texts should be first practiced in writing instruction for many low–level high school students, which was also recommended by Nguyen Ho Hoang Thuy (2009).

As shown in Table 5, besides the aforesaid beliefs on the choice of form–based and functional social–based orientations to teaching writing at high schools, the interviewees also agreed that teachers should guide students how to compose a text independently (Item 12; M= 3.89; SD= .80) and organize collaborative activities such as pair-work or group-work for the students (Item 13; M= 3.74; SD= 1.06). To raise his voice, the researcher posits that the teachers need to help their students understand what steps of writing they should take to become an independent writer in different situations, even in examinations. Concurrently,

interaction is built up among students during writing class can bring out considerable benefits because "if students are encouraged to participate in the activities of meaning exchange with their more able people like peers in learning writing, it can help student writers have positive reinforcements about the knowledge of linguistics, content and ideas in composing texts" (Luu Trong Tuan, 2011).

To recap, it goes without saying that the participating teachers had multiple orientations to teaching writing in the high schools. In particular, form–based orientation (item 10) was still the most prioritized option by these teachers; then functional social–based orientation was positively taken into account (item 11); finally there was a slight favor of process–based (item 12) and interactive social–based (item 13) orientations. It meant that the teachers did favor a joint of product, process, and genre–based approaches in their writing instruction. Nevertheless, the teachers' pedagogical beliefs about instructional activities mostly followed the view of knowledge transmission rather than that of knowledge construction. Ultimately, using different orientations to teaching writing skill is important in high school context as bo di Uddin (2014) points out that "teachers need orientation regarding different approaches to teaching writing other than what they follow along with practical demonstration on how each approach functions". It means that instead of following only one approach, teachers should employ a flexible combination of various teaching orientations to optimize students' writing learning.

Table 6

Beliefs about the choice of corrective feedback

Item	Corrective Feedback	N	M	SD
14	The teacher should provide corrective feedback on students' language use (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, mechanics).	76	4.03	.84
15	The teacher should provide corrective feedback on students' idea development (e.g. coherent and cohesion).	76	3.45	.86
16	The teacher should provide corrective feedback on students' both language use and idea development.	76	4.34	.76
Valid N (Listwise)		76		

As a post-writing step, teachers' correction of students' written work is an indispensable component of teaching process, contributing to students' writing development. Two methods of providing corrective feedback (Fathman and Walley, 1990, in Zaman and Azad, 2012) include (1) one method focusing on the form or language accuracy; (2) and the other emphasizing on the content, which is primarily developed through cognitive meaning–making process. The above table clearly shows that most of the participants strongly believed that providing corrective feedback on both language use and idea development is the best way (Item 16; M= 4.34; SD= .76) to help enhance students' writing ability. Qualitatively, all the five interviewees totally agreed that corrective feedback has a good effect on students' writing overall quality. For instance, teacher C and teacher E precisely expressed that

> *According to my personal view, by any degree, teachers should correct their students' writing in term of overall quality... I mean form and content. Thus, students are able to develop their writing better. Although I have no much time, when giving corrective feedback to my students' writing, I usually concentrate on vocabulary,*

> *grammar, punctuation, and even idea development.*
>
> (Teacher C)
>
> *...I consider that in order to help our students improve their writing better, we should give comments on overall quality of their writing such as correct grammar, correct spelling, suitable punctuation, clarity and coherence as well.*
>
> (Teacher E)

The table above also reveals that the participating teachers preferred providing corrective feedback on students' language use (M= 4.03; SD= .84) to their idea development (M= 3.45; SD= .86). It seems that the teachers, to some extent, still favored form–based orientation rather than meaning–making process–based one in providing written feedback. Nevertheless, the results also show teachers' positive belief in a combination of both form–based and meaning–making process–based orientations in providing corrective feedback. This shows how important teachers' corrective feedback is to the overall quality of students' writing because writing ability not only refers to accurate language use but also fluent idea development. In other words, teachers should focus on both sentential and textual levels whencorrecting students' writing.

Table 7

Beliefs about the encouragement of students' writing practice

Item	Students' extensive writing	N	M	SD
17	The teacher only need to have students to complete writing tasks exposed in the textbooks.	76	3.82	.69
18	The teacher should create a favorable environment for students to write a lot.	76	4.49	.77
Valid N (Listwise)		76		

"Practice makes perfect" is a theme that teachers should observe to give their high school students more chances to practice writing. According to Herder and King (2012, cited in Pham, Vu Phi Ho, 2013), just inside-the-classroom activities are not enough for students to practice and improve their writing. Thus, Uddin (2014) requests students should be asked to join out–of–class writing activities more as all the steps of writing process could not be fully accomplished within classrooms. Positively, Table 7 reveals that the participants widely agreed that teachers should create more favorable environments for students to practice writing (Item 18; M= 4.49; SD= .77) rather than letting them do controlled practices in the textbooks (Item 17; M= 3.82; SD= .69). By this way, students could manipulate various stages of the writing process such as idea brainstorming, idea organizing, and appropriate linguistic selecting by themselves. Parallel with this quantitative finding, all the five interviewees also agreed that it is necessary to offer students more writing practice; typically, *"...the more my students practice, the more their writing skill is improved"* (Teacher B). In other words, it is even better to assign homework on similar topic and text types for students because "practice makes perfect". Through homework writing assignments, the cognitive processes can be done in a more comfortable way because the stages of the writing process could not be fully completed in an environment with temporal limit and rigid curriculum as in the classroom.

> *I find it crucial for language teachers to assign their students some topics to write at home. You know, if writing at home, students will become more comfortable without time pressure. Secondly, when writing at home, these students will have much time to accomplish steps of writing process such as collecting ideas, outlining them, editing spelling, grammatical mistakes, except for cases that they copy the sample texts down from online resources.*
>
> (Teacher A)

4. Conclusion

4.1. Teachers' beliefs about the nature of writing in the high school context

Unsurprisingly, the teachers of the eight selected high schools strongly believed that language accuracy and text structure are the main concerns of writing. However, it seems most surprising that many of them also positively admitted the functional social–based aspect of writing, which deals with the target audience, communicative purposes and situational context of writing. In addition, some teachers somehow believed that writing is best acquired through meaning–making process as well as through interactions among students. In short, these high school teachers' beliefs about nature of writing were quite multiple. Accordingly, they perceived writing skill at high school level is not only restricted

by separate language and text forms but also summons students much cognitive process and functional awareness and collaboration. This tallies with previous studies on the nature of writing by Schmitt (2010), Mekki (2012), Khanalizadeh and Allami (2012), and Uddin (2014).

4.2. Teachers' beliefs about teacher roles in writing classrooms

Most of the participants agreed that language teachers must be a direct knowledge transmitter to give learners some input before asking them to write instead of letting them totally relying on the teacher as the main facilitator in the writing classrooms. This is a good way to help students write better. A combination and flexibility of the above teacher roles were highly appreciated by a large number of the participating teachers.

4.3. Teachers' beliefs about teaching act

With respect to instructional materials, the teachers highly appreciated that employing authentic supplementary materials along with the prescribed textbooks is necessary because they considerably contribute to developing students' awareness of social contexts and functions of different writing text types.

Regarding instructional activities, the selected participants strongly believed that form–based orientation to teaching writing should be used by studying model texts on the basis of linguistic features and genre schematic structures before having students write. Noticeably, functional social–based orientation to teaching writing was also highly favored by the teachers as a necessity to raise students' awareness of social functions and purposes of writing. Besides, the teachers agreed, to some extent, that collaborative activities such as pairs/groups (interactive social–based orientation) or instruction on composing a text independently (cognitive process–based orientation) should be often held in writing classes.

As for corrective feedback, many strongly believed that providing feedback on the overall quality of students' writing is the best way to help improve their writing skill. In terms of each separate aspect, the study found that language accuracy surpasses idea fluency.

For extensive writing practice of students, most participants strongly applauded that practicing writing on the same topics and text types outside the classroom is an ideal way for teaching writing based on the motto "practice makes perfect". Thus, writing steps can be practiced in a more comfortable way with no time pressure■

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