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The Development of English Writing Ability using Process Writing Approach of Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The purposes of this research was to study and compare the English writing ability before and after using process writing approach of undergraduate students. The samples consisted 26 undergraduate students from Northeastern University, Muang, Khon Kaen, in the first semester of the 2022 academic year. They were selected by cluster random sampling. The design of this research was a one group pretest-posttest design. The research instruments included 8 lesson plans. The experiment lasted 8 weeks, 2 hours a week, or 16 hours in total. Statistics used in the study were mean, percentage, standard deviation, one-sample t-test and t-test for dependent samples.

The findings of the research was the students' pretest and posttest scores on the English writing ability test were 9.83 or 39.33 percent and 17.01 or 68.05 percent respectively and their posttest score for writing ability was higher than their pretest.

Keywords: English writing ability, process writing approach

1. Introduction

English has been one of the most important languages in the world since people all over the world use English to communicate with others from foreign countries. In some countries, people use English as an official language and while others do not, it is still useful for communication. People can transfer culture from one generation to another as well as from one nation to another using English. Therefore, it can be said that English is an international language which is intermediary for people around the world to communicate and understand each other (Office of the Basic Education Commission of Thailand, 2008: 9). English is also the third most widely spoken language in the world after Chinese and Spanish. It has extended throughout the world and continues to be a major language (Cenoz & Jessner, 2000:7). Crystal (2003: 1) mentions that English is a global language because, wherever we travel, we will see English signs and advertisements. Crystal (2003: 68-69) also claims that there are around 1,500 million speakers who use English as a native, a second, or a foreign language. It was estimated that 750 million people are first or second language speakers, while the rest of 750 million use English as a foreign language. English also serves as an important tool for education and access to knowledge.

In Thailand, English plays an important role more now than in the past. This can be presumed from the proliferation of international schools. Furthermore, English is being extensively used as the language of instruction in numerous international universities in Thailand. Since 2015, Thailand has participated in the ASEAN community and English has been the official language for communication of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). ASEAN (2008: 29) states that "The working language of ASEAN shall be English" which is relevant to Grzega's (2009: 50) statement that English is as a door-opener to other languages and cultures. It serves as a tool for successful global communication (Grzega & Marion, 2007). At present, the education system has been reformed. Teaching of various educational institutions has been conducted according to the curriculum of each faculty and it has also determined that the learners have 5 competencies and the important competencies of the learners is the ability to communicate. The ability to communicate refers to the ability to listen, speak, read and write a foreign language to the fullest extent according to all five learning standards. (Chaimeerang. 2021: 70) Hence, Thai people need to gain more English competence to use in their education and work to look for better opportunities in their lives. Thus, being ready for English communication is essential and one should prepare thoroughly. As a matter of fact, English fluency has become an important advantage for anyone pursuing employment in business, industry or technology in Thailand. Accordingly, the purpose of learning English in our universities is to qualify students to communicate so that they can enter the labor market and to handle the challenges of higher education as well.



Writing is one of the most important skills used in communication. It is also important in teaching foreign languages to students at each grade level because learners use written English as a tool to convey their own knowledge, thoughts and experiences. Although writing is important but most students do not pay attention to the practice of writing skills. This is due to the complexity of the writing process because writing requires a thought process and compilation of ideas to communicate to the readers understandably. As said by Rattana Mahasakul (1997: 163) that writing in English consists of a multi-step process whether it's a collection of ideas about the subject to write, order of thought and the choice of words to be used in conveying a message to make communication according to the purpose set by the writers. Therefore, writers need to accumulate knowledge, experience and practice writing regularly. The writers will be able to create writings out effectively. This is in line with the concept of Raimes (1983: 3), which says that the more effort we put into writing, the more we will find more new stories bring to write more. From the statement of many experts, it shows that writing is a more complex process and procedure than any other skills and requires constant practice. As the researcher has studied the documents and research related to teaching English writing, it was found that process writing approach is the teaching of writing that puts the focus on the student and emphasizes that students focus on the issues of the content they would like to convey rather than the written piece. Process writing approach has clear steps and activities that it can help students learn the steps to produce accurate writing and encourage students to have a variety of concepts. These are the results of activities that encourage students to exchange ideas and experiences among their peers. This is in line with Brown's statement (1994:32) that teaching process writing approach is an activity that fosters brainstorming and encourages thinking. Students will learn the sequence of writing steps to create an effective piece of writing.

According to the test scores of undergraduate students enrolled in a Basic Reading and Writing in English course is quite low. Students have some problems with vocabulary, grammar errors and how to write smoothly in the content that make writing skill difficult. Thus they need to improve their English writing ability.

The researcher has considered that solving students' English writing problems using process writing approach may help students with difficulties in their writing English. Therefore, the researcher would like to employ process writing approach of Hedge (2005:52:54) and adapt the writing activities to be suitable with undergraduate students from Northeastern University to determine whether this method can improve their writing ability. Additionally, the research findings may be guidelines for teaching English writing in Thailand in the future.

2. Purposes of the study

The purpose of the study was as follow:

1. To study and compare the English writing ability of undergraduate students using process writing approach before and after studying.

3. Methodology

Population and Sample

1. Population

The population in this study was 185 undergraduate students who enrolled in a Basic Reading and Writing in English Course (GE10303) in 4 classrooms at Northeastern University, Muang, Khon Kaen.

2. Sample

The sample in this study was 26 undergraduate students studying in a Basic Reading and Writing in English course (GE10303) in the first semester of the 2022 academic year at Northeastern University, Muang, Khon Kaen. They were selected by cluster random sampling using the section as a sampling unit.

Research Instruments

1. Lesson plans for teaching English writing using process writing approach consisted of 8 units for 2 hours a unit. Eight lesson plans were developed to teach writing English using process writing approach.

2. An English writing ability test was developed by the researcher based on Cohen (1998: 89) to examine the ability of students in 5 aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and strategy.

Data Collection

The researcher collected the data in the first semester of the 2022 academic year. The details of data collection are as follows:

- 1.1 The pretest was done using the English writing ability test before teaching using process writing approach.



- 1.2 The teaching program was conducted according using the eight lesson plans.
- 1.3 The posttest was done using the English writing ability test which was the same as the pretest after the teaching process was completed.
- 1.4 The data from the pretest and the posttest was analyzed.

Data Analysis

1. Undergraduate students English speaking ability using mean (\bar{X}), percentage, and standard deviation (S.D.)
2. The differences of the pretest and posttest English speaking ability results were compared using t-test for Dependent Samples.

4. Results of the study

The findings of the research were as follows:

1. The students' average English writing ability pretest and posttest scores were 9.83 or 39.33 percent and 17.01 or 68.05 percent, respectively and the students' posttest score writing ability was higher than their pretest score.

5. Discussion

This study was experimental research with a one group pretest - posttest design. It aimed to study and compare students' English writing ability before and after using process writing approach. The research findings can be summarized as follows:

According to the study and comparison of undergraduate students English writing ability before and after using process writing approach, it was found that students' average pretest and posttest scores were 9.83 or 39.33 percent and 17.01 or 68.05 percent, respectively. These findings support the hypothesis. The students' posttest score on English writing ability was significantly higher, at the .01 level. It was found that process writing approach promoted undergraduate students' English writing ability. Conclusion is presented as follows:

According to the test scores of 26 students' English writing proficiency before study, it shows that the students' proficiency in writing English was relatively low. The reason is because students lack knowledge in the process of producing writings in various aspects, content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and writing strategies. In addition to that, students also lack systematic thinking. Due to the reasons mentioned above, students are unable to produce quality writing and the traditional way of teaching writing can not arouse students' interest as a result writing an activity that students do not pay attention to and think that writing is a difficult and boring activity. However, after the students were taught to write English using process writing approach, it appeared that the students had developed more English writing abilities. This can be seen from the students' scores on the test of their English writing proficiency after studying higher than before. A reason is because teaching English using process writing approach according to Hedge's concept (2005: 51) is a writing teaching activity that focuses on students' writing practice step by step. It consists of 3 main steps. Each step has smaller activities starting from the pre-writing stage. It is a planning process before writing using a variety of activities by allowing the writer to write a rough draft of the work for the writer to consider the information to be written and select the information that is appropriate for the writing. There are many activities that can be used to plan before writing, such as quick note-taking to get as much information as possible, create a mind map to use as a note-taking tool. Drafting and redrafting consists of writing a first draft and revising it to make it better by focusing on what the learner wants to say. The process of editing the writing is the post-writing stage. The student reads the writing again to check understanding focus on the readers to understand the content that the writer would like to convey, spelling check, use of punctuation, grammar usage and the correct use of the language for the last time. If a mistake is found, the writer needs to bring the writing back to the draft stage to correct the written work. Students will then present their work in front of the class. It can be seen that Hedge's teaching of process writing approach is a way of teaching writing with activities that encourage students to think systematically. There is collaboration as a group resulting in the exchange of knowledge and experience. As a result, students have diverse and creative ideas. From the test scores of the students' English writing proficiency after the study was higher than before at the statistical significance level of .01, it was demonstrated that teaching English writing using process writing approach could improve their ability in English writing skills. Teaching written English using process writing approach helps to improve students' writing ability in English. This is consistent with the concept of Hedge (2005: 12), which states that process writing approach is a teaching activity whose purpose is to encourage students'



systematic thinking. There is a writing activity in a step by step and a clear writing system. It is also in line with the concept of Cohen (1998: 105-107) that writing requires systematic writing. The writing process starts from drafting, being revised by peers or writers can evaluate their writings for themselves. Then send the written work to the teacher for review. Students will be able to revise their writing to get the best writing. Students then publish their writings from the above concept. It shows that writing is a language skill that requires mental organization, step by step, writing plan in order to get writings that are readable, understandable and able to communicate according to the writer's purpose.

In addition, the teaching of writing English using process writing approach provides more activities that stimulate interest and generate more diverse ideas. Display a picture and have students answer questions from the picture together is an activity that draws students' attention to the topics to be written and helps students understand the topic of writing more. This is consistent with the idea of Raimes (1983: 27), which states that everyone likes to look at pictures. Thus, using pictures in class can make students more interested in writing topics and using pictures also brings the experience of the outside world into the classroom. The idea of using images is also consistent with Hedge's idea (2005: 69-70), which states that using pictures is a popular technique used in teaching writing because the use of pictures allows students to see the overall picture of what will be written more clearly. In the questioning activity part, the teacher asks questions from the pictures for students to answer. This is consistent with the idea of Ronald and Bridge (2002:28) that asking questions is the best technique used to find relevant details in writing because questioning is asking to get ideas related to the topic in writing the details to be derived from what students answer and in line with Lannon's idea (2009: 25-26) said that asking questions generates new ideas. The questions used were Why, When, Who, How. Brainstorming activities were activities where students worked together, discussed and shared experiences. This makes students have more diverse concepts. This is consistent with Carol and Susan's (2005: 8) stating that brainstorming is an activity that generates new ideas as a guide for further writing. Correction of writing is an activity in which students practice checking for flaws in their peers' writing. This activity gives students the opportunity to practice finding errors and understanding them in order to be corrected further. This is in line with the concept of Hedge (2005: 134-140), which states that reviewing writings for friends will help the students remember the mistakes of their friends and explaining the mistakes to listen will help the learners to understand the writing more clearly but reviewing writing must be done carefully in order to check the work is correct. Therefore, it can be said that Techniques used in writing English teaching activities using process writing approach able to improve students' English writing ability.

From the research of teaching writing English using process writing approach. It was found that the students' ability in English writing after study was higher than before. This is consistent with the research of Kanokporn Boon-arj (2010) who studied the development of English writing abilities by process writing approach of grade 6 students. From the results of this research, it was found that the students who learned English writing using the process writing approach had an average score of 37.91% and 75.42% after testing for mean differences, it was found that the students' English writing ability after learning was higher than before study at the statistical significance level of .01, and this was consistent with Gratz's research (2005) studying behavior and understanding of process writing approach of 80 fourth-grade students in Ohio, USA. The study found that students who are taught process writing approach were active in doing a research for writing. Students' writing is livelier and their language is more elegant than ever.

Consequently, it can be stated that process writing approach facilitated and motivated students to use the language to write effectively. After studying by process writing approach, the students' writing posttest scores were higher. Therefore, it can be concluded that using process writing approach can enhance students English writing.

6. Recommendations

1. Recommendations from the study

1.1 In order to make use of this study, the researcher proposes that it is from the research results, the students' posttest score writing ability was higher than the pretest score. The reason might be that process writing approach could facilitate and motivate students to use the language in writing effectively. Therefore, process writing approach should be promoted in teaching English writing.

1.2 From the research it was found that students have better improved in organizing and associating the content. It arises from the concept of mind mapping that students use as a tool to organize and illustrate the relationship between ideas. As a result, students are able to write better links to content.



2. Recommendations for further study

Some suggested for further productive research include:

- 2.1 Researchers should implement process writing approach activities to develop writing skill with other English language skills together, for instance, reading skill and listening skill.
- 2.2 Researchers should investigate teaching English writing using process writing approach at other educational levels of students.

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