
The Development of English Paragraph Writing Skills of Mathayomsuksa 5 (Grade 11) Students through the Process Approach

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare Matthayomsuksa 5 students' English paragraph writing ability before and after learning through the process approach. The sample purposively selected for this study was 40 Mathayomsuksa 5 students learning English 3 (E 32101) of U-Thong School in the first semester of the academic year 2018. In this one group pretest-posttest design study, the sample group was taught through the process approach for twelve 50-minute periods. The instruments were the English Writing Ability test with one question constructed by the researcher with the reliability of 0.95. For data analysis, the t-test Dependent Samples was conducted. The result of the study indicated that the English paragraph writing ability before and after the students were taught through the process approach was significantly different at the level of .01. Therefore, this research supports the notion that the process approach is an effectively practical way to teach writing in English classes. It could be adopted in writing classes at all level.

Keywords: Teaching EFL Writing, Process Approach, Writing Skill Development

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Introduction

The English language is one of the most important languages for international communication. In Thailand, the Ministry of Education (2008) has set the basic education core curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) in order to focus students on knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultures as well as foreign languages for communication, livelihood, and lifelong learning.

On the other hand, students have problems especially writing skill. It is found that writing skill is the skill that students lack most. Anchalee Sattayatham and Pongrat Ratanapinyowong (2008) found that most first-year medical students in a university had errors about a paragraph organization. They identified eight errors out of ten criteria with very high percent. Such errors were lack of an introduction, a topic sentence, supporting details, organization, transitional words, coherence, conclusion, and good language uses. Similarly, Sakon Kertphon's (1983) finding about error analysis of an essay written by high school students explained that there is lack of grammar, vocabulary, idioms, punctuation, spelling as well as ineffective communication that cannot express to make a reader understand.

It is deemed important that students should be fluent in four English skills for communication, further education, and livelihood in everyday life proficiently. Of these skills, writing skill is considered more difficult than other skills because, in addition to language skills, it requires to search and organize information to be a good piece of writing. Sasitorn Changpakorn (1988) explained that a student who is skilled at writing has good listening skill thanks to much experience in listening, good reading skill because of reading a lot and good speaking skill owing to using a register well. Moreover, advantages of writing skills make students think systematically. That is, they need to plan, review, and edit in order to communicate thoughts and experiences understandably.

Nevertheless, writing is beneficial in helping students review lessons about grammar and vocabulary to write a piece of writing. According to Raimes (1983: 3), writing skill helps students practice language use by using vocabulary and grammar to write for communication in real-life contexts. The more students practice writing skills, the more they learn and have more writing techniques. As stated by Pinheiro (1996), a good piece of writing needs planning, reviewing, and editing accurately many times because a writer cannot express gestures, face expressions, or tone. As a result, a writer needs to write it proficiently by connecting thoughts or stories well, having accurate information, and using appropriate vocabulary and grammar correctly.

These views of writing as a process led to the teaching writing through process approach. Tribbles (1996) defines the process approach as an approach emphasizing on developing ideas and the writers' creativity rather than the imitation of the models. Similarly, Raimes (1983: 10-11) explains that the process approach is the writing process to give time and feedback for students as a process of discovery of learning new ideas and new language forms. Hyland (2012) states that the model of the process approach founded by Flower and Hayes (Flower, 1989; Flower and Hayes 1981) has ten



steps including selecting the topic, prewriting, composing, responding to draft, revising, responding to revisions, proofreading and editing, evaluating, publishing, and following-up tasks. Students can go back and forth at any steps of the approach. According to Arteaga-Lara (2017), the process approach helps students know how to plan and organize during writing, have the opportunity to discuss ideas and give and receive immediate feedback on language in order to make writing more precise, and help students improve their writing by evaluating their writing many times.

Previous studies to examine the effect of process approach on writing improvement found that the process approach had been effectively used to improve writing skills of students in high schools such as Thammasarnsophon (1992), Preepool (2008), Tan-on (2010), and Toopjui et al. (2016). Therefore, the researcher was interested to apply this approach to teach writing to improve paragraph writing ability in order to be the good foundation for further kinds of writing.

Objectives

The objective of the study was to compare Mathayomsuksa 5 students' English paragraph writing ability before and after learning through the process approach.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the research was that the students' English paragraph writing ability after the implementation was higher than before the implementation

Scope of research

1. Population and Sample

1.1 Population: The population of this research was 312 Mathayomsuksa 5 students at U-Thong School, U-Thong, Suphanburi, Thailand.

1.2 Sample: The participants of this research were 40 Mathayomsuksa 5 students at U-Thong School, U-Thong, Suphanburi, Thailand. All the participants, who were in Mathematics and Sciences program, were studying English 3 (E32101) in the first semester of the academic year 2018. They were selected purposively based on their poor scores in writing test of midterm examination in the first semester although they were somewhat good at English language uses.

2. Variable Scope

2.1 Independent variable: Process Approach

2.2 Dependent variable: students' English paragraph writing skills

3. Research Design

This study was a pretest-posttest one group design.

4. Research Duration

The research duration was four weeks. There were three 50-minute periods in each week and twelve 50-minute periods in total.

5. Content

Narrative paragraph writing was considered to be the topic of the research because it was relevant to “Upstream 5,” which the participants used as a textbook.

Methodology

1. Data Collection Tool

1.1 Students’ Narrative Paragraphs

The data collection tool was a paragraph written test that the students had to do before and after the implementation of process writing. For pre-tests, the students were required to write a 100-word narrative paragraph in 30 minutes by writing one of the three given three topics: (1) a happy experience, (2) a frightening experience, and (3) an embarrassing experience. For post-tests, the students were told to write another topic that was not the same topic which they had written earlier. The paragraphs were evaluated based on Jacobs et al (1981) rubric by the researcher and two English teachers at U-Thong School. The writing was evaluated based on the five categories: (1) content: to consider whether the writing is well-informed and relevant to the topic; (2) organization: to consider whether the writing is well-organized and has clear ideas; (3) language use: to consider whether the grammar in the writing is effective for the topic; (4) vocabulary: to consider whether the word choice or usage is appropriate, and (5) mechanics: to consider whether spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are correct or not. Each part has a four-level score equivalent to four sets of criteria. Originally, the total score is 100; however, the total score for this research was simplified to 20 instead. The score range of each level in every part was changed into four, three, two, and one because the researcher does not have much experience in written test evaluation. Despite the dated criteria, it covers all important aspects of writing and is easy to use as a feedback for writing. The Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient of the rubric for three scorers was calculated to be 0.95, which it was found to be very effective to use as the rubric for this research. The average scores of the three scorers were final scores. After that, their scores were collected and analyzed.

2. Procedures

2.1 The researcher selected 40 Mathayomsuksa 5 students at U-Thong School, who were studying English 3 (E32101) in the first semester of the academic year 2018 selectively.

2.2 Prior to the implementation, the students were required to do the paragraph written-test constructed by the researcher by writing one of any the three topics before the experiment.

2.3 The researcher taught narrative writing to the students through the process approach in twelve fifty-minute periods in two weeks.

2.4 The students were asked to do the same written-test by writing a different topic from the test before the experiment.

2.5 The tests before and after the experiment were collected and checked by three scorers: the researcher, the English teacher who taught English 3 (E32101), and the English teacher who taught Reading and Writing Skills at U-Thong School. The scorers used the edited rubric from Jacobs et al (1981) to evaluate the pre-tests and post-tests. After that, the final scores from the pre-test and the post-test were prepared to be analysed using t-test Dependent Samples.

2.6 The results from data analysis were summarized and discussed later.

3. Data Analysis

Every score from the pre-test and post-test was analyzed by using descriptive statistics for means, and standard deviations. Dependent samples t-test was calculated to compare the average scores of the pre-test and post-test.

Results and Discussions

1. Results

Table 1: The results of t-test dependent samples comparing the pre-test and post-test of the participants

Result		N	\bar{X}	S.D.	t
The result of the students' writing ability through the process approach	Pre-test	40	3.77	1.00	14.02**
	Post-test	40	6.24	1.31	

* $p \leq 0.01$

The purpose of this study was to compare Matthayomsuksa 5 students' English paragraph writing ability before and after the process approach. The data from the pre-tests and post-tests were analyzed to determine whether the pre-test and post-test scores on the participants' paragraph writing ability were different significantly. It was found that the average score of the pre-test is 3.77 from the total of 10 and the average score of the post-test is 6.24.

The result of t-test dependent samples shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test average scores of the participants ($t_{(39)} = 14.02$; $p < 0.01$). In conclusion, the process approach had a significant effect on the participants' writing ability.

2. Discussions

The research aimed to study the development of Matthayomsuksa 5 students' English paragraph writing ability before and after learning through the process approach and had the findings that:

1. To compare Matthayomsuksa 5 students' English paragraph writing ability before and after the implementation of the process approach



It was found that the students' English paragraph writing ability before and after the implementation was different significantly at .01, which tallied with the research hypothesis and the statement about the process approach made by Raimes (1983) who said that the process approach makes students practice their writing skills in all aspects because they have opportunities to review and edit their writing until the piece of writing is complete, so the students understand and know how to write a paragraph more. Consequently, these important and potential points which may affect the development of students' English paragraph writing ability are discussed here:

1. The process approach provides activities inspiring students to begin their writing with pre-writing. This step helps them get and prepare ideas from material given by a teacher such as short stories and videos. Brown (Brown, 1994. cited by Compeerapap, 1997: 42-43) explains that the pre-writing is the stage helping students have ideas what they are going to write by doing activities in order to promote extensive and various ideas.

2. The process approach allows students to revise their writing until the work is complete. The more times they have chances of editing their writing, the more fluency in written English they can improve. As a result, students who were taught through the process approach can gather ideas very fast. (Thammasarnsophon, 1992)

Besides, students will get feedbacks on content and organization from a teacher. After that, students can practice to try peer-review other friends' work as teachers tell them to check ungrammatical errors to some extent, which helps students improve their language uses. They will be more and more enthusiastic to edit their writing after they finish practicing peer-review because they are initiated into using language for communication. Moreover, students learning writing as a group can brainstorm and help each other during practicing their writing. Raimes (1983) suggested that it is important that writing activities be done in group along the way in order that students who are good at English help others who are slow learners and then the weak students can learn a way how to write and edit their writing.

As a result, teaching writing through the process approach to Matthayomsuksa 5 students at U-Thong school can foster students' English paragraph writing ability before and after the process approach and it is found that the post-test score was higher than the pre-test score significantly at .01. The process approach encourages students to think systematically, use language for communication well, and write clearly and grammatically (Tan-on, 2010).

Recommendation

1. Suggestions for teaching writing classes

1. Students should be asked to present their writing to other groups in order to discuss and give some feedbacks so that everybody can understand the concept of writing a paragraph.



2. Teachers is supposed to provide and prepare materials such as dictionaries or allow students to go to the library to search more information and have knowledge about the topic the students are writing.

2. Suggestions for further research

1. More time is needed since it takes time to observe students' development in writing skills.
2. The research can be focused on what kind of feedbacks is suitable for teaching writing through the process approach.

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