

The Effects of the Writing Process: A Study of Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi Students' Writing Development

Suarsaraha Suwannatthep

Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, Thailand
suarsaraha.suwannatthep@gmail.com

Abstract: The purpose of this research was to study the effectiveness of the writing process on developing students' writing ability. Two hundred and sixty three first year students at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi were asked to write pretest and posttest essays in a three-hour session. The students' compositions were collected and analyzed for students' overall writing quality and VocabProfile, a software program, was applied to find students' lexical development. A t-test was used to find the difference between pretest and posttest essays. The results showed that there were significant differences at the .01 level between score in the pre-and post-tests. It can be said that students improved their writing ability after using the writing process as the method of teaching.

Keywords: *The writing process; VocabProfile*

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language nowadays. It is widely used as a tool in communication. The working language of ASEAN is English. It refers that people use English in ten ASEAN countries. Not only the officers use English, but also the people in these use it in daily communication. Writing is one of English skills. It is an important skill which one can use as a mean to communicate with other people. Generally, people write notes and letters to family members, friends, and relatives in everyday communication. In workplaces, people write many kinds of correspondence to conduct business transactions including business letters, minutes, and memos. In school, students are always assigned to write paragraphs, essays, and reports for course requirements. As shown above, writing involves us in all aspects of life, and is also used as a formal form of documentation to give witness or evidence in legal matters. Thus, it is necessary to possess good writing skills because they will enable the writer to communicate effectively, and pave his/her way to successful future career. The stronger the writing skills one has, the more successful he/she becomes.

Nevertheless, students with less competence often struggle with writing grammatical sentences. Most of the time, they pay attention to grammar rather than to the ideas they want to express. Some of those who can write correct and meaningful sentences cannot tie these

sentences into a paragraph or an essay. Especially, Thai undergraduate students face difficulties in choosing words and writing sentences. To overcome the students' problems above, many teachers have tried many ways to solve the students' difficulties in writing. Some teachers believe that teaching grammar prior to teach students' compositions can solve students' problems in writing. Thus, they encourage students to write correct sentences and focus on grammatical accuracy.

However, most students feel discouraged to write because they still make mistakes and their compositions are often strained with red markings. Later, researchers introduced the writing process in teaching writing. This approach emphasizes ideas and contents in a written task. Many teachers applied this method in their classrooms. In the writing process, learners always set a goal before writing. They can change or improve ideas during the process. Writing is regarded as a product of the thinking process. That is, students are able to transform ideas and information because writing and thinking work together as a process. In brief, teaching compositions by using the writing process has been widely applied in writing classrooms.

Nonetheless, research about the effects of teaching composition by using the writing process to undergraduate students has rarely been done at Rajamangala University of Technology

Thanyaburi. Thus, the researcher aims to analyze undergraduate students' compositions in order to detect the students' overall development after implementing the writing process as a method of teaching. Moreover, vocabulary use is also studied to find the students' development at word level.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To analyze students' pre-and post-tests in order to detect the students' overall writing quality.
2. To analyze students' pre-and post-tests in order to detect the students' lexical development.

Significance of the Study

This research will be beneficial as follows:

1. It encourages teachers to use the writing process as a method of teaching writing.
2. It can be used as a guideline to improve students' vocabulary.
3. It can be used as a guideline to develop students' writing ability.
4. It can encourage teachers and researchers to do research following the same research model.

Scope of the Study

The study involved 263 first-year students taking English for Communication Course and English for Communication 2 Course in the second semester of the academic year 2015 at Rajamanga University of Technology Thanyaburi as participants in the study.

Definition of Terms

1. The writing process refers to the method of teaching writing used in this study.
2. VocabProfile [1] is a software computer program used as a measurement to detect lexical development.

In summary, it is necessary that students require a good writing skill so that they will be well-equipped for their future study or career. This research aims to study the effects of using the writing process as a method of teaching writing to undergraduate students at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the related literature is divided into two sections: the writing process, and VocabProfile Program.

1. The Writing Process

Writing is regarded as a process, not a written product. This clarifies that writing assignments are never complete. Thus, students are always able to review and revise the writing as many times as they

like with their work. The writing process includes steps of writing such as writing situation, brainstorming, planning or outlining, writing the first draft, revision, recursive writing, editing, and proofreading.

First, students are encouraged to assess their writing situation. The writing situation is defined as the key elements of writing: subject, purpose, audience, and constraints [2]. Constraints are defined as length of document, document design, review session, and deadline. In this step, students can save their time in writing by finding their writing situation prior to writing. After the students have studied the writing situation, the next writing step is to generate ideas. This process is also called brainstorming. According to Oshima and Hogue [3], generating ideas is a useful step in writing. Some techniques used in generating ideas are listing, free writing, and clustering. Whatever technique students use, the goal is the same; that is to generate wealth of ideas. In the two stages aforementioned, students are able to determine their topics, and generate ideas. Therefore, students are ready for the next stage in the process of writing, the planning, or outlining stage. Miller [4] states that some writers reveal that it is helpful to write an outline. The outline will present their main points. Therefore, students are taught to divide all ideas into two, or three main groups, and then make sublists to support each main group. Besides, a topic sentence is also needed in this step. This is because the topic sentence points out the central idea of the paragraph; hence, students should practice writing topic sentences before drafting [3]. Writing the first draft is the next step in the writing process. The first draft is also called a rough draft because it may consist of errors. Also, the ideas produced in the first draft are probably rough.

Nevertheless, students may have new ideas, or they may see a new relationship among ideas while writing the first draft. That is because idea generation can always happen through the drafting step. In contrast, if students cannot generate ideas while drafting, they can skip the difficult part, and then leave a space to be filled later. Probably, the words students need will come to them while working on other parts of the essay [5]. After the first draft is completed, the stage of making changes is revision. Revision is defined as seeing again. It is considered the most important step in the writing process. This is because during revision, student writers are rather concerned with content and sentence effectiveness than grammar and usage [5]. Thus, experienced writers rarely write only one draft. Rewriting several drafts helps writers to be aware of all mistakes occurring during making drafts [2]. Recursive writing is also considered. That is, the composition process is a

recursive process by which students can go back to various stages of the writing process while writing [6]. This clarifies that students are able to omit difficult tasks for others. That is, if students cannot write the introduction, they can write the conclusion or the body before the introduction. After the revision, editing is the next step in the writing process. Editing is defined as a process of finding and correcting errors in grammar and usage [7]. Students can correct their compositions by themselves, which is called self-editing. Also, they can invite teachers or peers to correct their work. Peer-editing takes a role in editing, or errors correcting. Error correcting covers making corrections in spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar. That is to say, the students need an audience to read their compositions in order to improve their writing. That is why students can play two roles: as an audience and as an editor [6].

Finally, the final check is proofreading. Proofreading is defined as a special kind of reading. It is a slow and methodical search for misspellings and mistakes in written texts [2]. Also, it is an important step in writing. This is because all of us always make copying or typing errors when we have limited time. Thus, students should proofread their final copy to check for errors made while typing or recopying a draft. In conclusion, writing situation, brainstorming, planning or outlining, writing the first draft, revision, recursive writing, editing, and proofreading are considered steps in the writing process. It plays an important role to provide a secure path, or steps in writing a composition. Moreover, writing is regarded as a process, not a written product. That is the reason why writing assignments are never complete. Students can always review, revise, or make changes in their writing until they are satisfied with their work.

2. *VocabProfile* Program

VocabProfile Program refers to a computer software program developed by Nation [1]. This program is used to analyze students' vocabulary use in overall writing. *VocabProfile* classifies words into vocabulary level, word type, word token, and word family. In terms of vocabulary level, *VocabProfile* groups words into four levels according to the frequency of word usage as follows: Level 1 or Base List 1 counts the 1,000 most frequent words. Level 2 or Base List 2 counts the second thousand most frequent words. Level 3 or Base List 3 counts academic words. Level 4 or Base List 4 counts words which are not found in any of the three lists above. Moreover, *VocabProfile* classifies words into word type, word token, and word family as follows:

1) Word type refers to different words in a text. A word is counted according to its type. For example:

When I was young, I listened to the radio.

This example is counted as eight word types because I is counted only once.

2) Word token refers to the total number of words in a text. For instance:

When I was young, I listened to the radio.

This example is counted as nine word tokens.

3) Word family refers to a headword in word forms. For example:

Collect, collects, collected, collecting, collective, and collection.

These words are counted as one word family.

Briefly, *VocabProfile* is a software program used as a tool to measure students' vocabulary size and development. This program classifies words into frequency usage of word, word type, word token, and word family.

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the participants and data analysis are presented.

1. The Participants: The participants of this study were 263 first-year students who enrolled in the English for Communication Course and the English for Communication 2 Course in the second semester of the academic year 2015 at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi.

2. Data Analysis: Totally 526 compositions; 263 from the pretests, and 263 from the posttests were used as the data as follows:

2.1 Analysis of Overall Writing Quality: To analyze the overall writing quality, the researcher, who is the instructor at a state university was trained to use holistic scoring guide, the ESL Composition Profile, to rate all 38 compositions in order to detect the overall quality of each composition. The scoring guide classified 100 scores into five components: content 30 points, organization 20 points, vocabulary 20 points, language use 25 points, and mechanics 5 points. Besides, all components above were grouped into four levels: excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor, and very poor. After scoring,

the scores given by the three raters were calculated for inter raters' reliability by applying Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The scores were also analyzed for mean, standard deviation, and t-test in order to compare students' writing ability before and after using the writing process.

2.2 *Analysis of Vocabulary Size*: To analyze the amount of vocabulary used in the participants' compositions, VocabProfile [1], a software program, was applied according to the following steps:

1. The participants' pre-tests and post-tests were typed into the software program, VocabProfile.
2. The vocabulary used in the compositions was classified into four lists, and then the number of words in each base list was calculated into percentage.
3. The data was analyzed for means, standard

deviation, and t-test in order to see the difference between vocabulary use in the pre-test and the post-test. In summary, the overall writing quality, and amount of vocabulary use in the first year students were counted and calculated for means, and standard deviation. Moreover, the t-test was also applied to compare the students' writing ability before and after using the writing process.

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented according to the objectives of the study:

1. Overall writing quality
2. Vocabulary development.

1. *Overall Writing Quality*: In this section, scores given by the researcher was analyzed for means, and standard deviation to compare the students' writing quality before and after using the writing process.

Table 1 Difference between Scores in the Pre-Test and Post-Test

Scores	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	t	p
TotalPre-test	263	48.46	15.238	-18.715	-20.937	.000*
TotalPost-test	263	67.17	11.692			

* p < .01

Table 1 reveals that the mean scores in the post-test was higher than that in the pre-test. Significantly, the mean scores in the pre-test and post-test were 48.46 and 67.17 respectively. The t-score was -20.937, and there was a significant difference between scores in the pre-test and post-test at the level of .01. Thus, it can be said that students improved their abilities in writing after the instruction. In brief, the statistics significantly showed the development of students' overall

writing quality after the instruction. Indeed, it can be said that the overall result of this part was significantly different at the .01 level.

2. *Vocabulary Development*: In this section, academic words found in students' compositions were analyzed for means and standard deviation in order to find students' lexical development. The descriptive statistics of word tokens in terms of academic words are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Word Tokens In Terms Of Academic Words

Word tokens	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean Difference	t	p
Pre-test	263	36.73	13.642	-26.354	-36.502	.000*
Post-test	263	63.08	12.289			

Table 2 presents the use of word tokens in terms of academic words. The results revealed that the mean numbers of academic words were different between the pre-test and post-test. The mean numbers of academic words used in the pre-test and post-test were 36.73, and 63.08 respectively. Therefore, it can be said that students improved their abilities in using academic words.

The results were statistically significant at the level of .01. In summary, the statistics results found in Table 2 directly showed students' competence in using vocabulary. Indeed, it can be said that students could produce more academic words after the instructions. From the findings above, the results revealed that there was effectiveness of using the writing process as the method of

teaching. The reason is students could improve their abilities in writing after the instruction. There was also development in terms of vocabulary used in the students' compositions.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into two sections: conclusion and discussion.

1. Conclusion:

Two hundred and sixty three students' pre-test and post-tests were analyzed for overall writing quality. Then, the amount of vocabulary use in the participants' compositions was put in VocabProfile [1], a software program, and then the data were analyzed for means, standard deviation, and t-test in order to see vocabulary development. The results were revealed according to the three main objectives as following. First, in terms of the overall writing quality, there was a development of students' overall writing quality after the instruction. The results revealed that there the mean scores in the pre-test and the post-test were 48.46 and 67.17. Thus, there was a significant difference between the students' compositions before and after the instruction at .01 level. Another, in terms of vocabulary development, the results showed that there was an increase use of academic words in the post-test. The mean scores of academic words used in the pre-test and the post-test were 36.73 and 63.08 respectively. The results revealed that there was significant difference in students' lexical development at the level of .01. In summary, students could develop their abilities in writing after the instruction. That is, there were significant differences between the pre-post-tests' score in all regards. Thus, it can be said that there was an effectiveness of using the writing process in teaching compositions.

2. Discussion:

Regarding students' overall writing quality, the results revealed that there was significant development if we consider the mean scores of the students' total pre-post tests. From the results, this study corresponds to Thilayat [8] and Zamel [9] studies. Thilavat [8] showed that students' abilities in writing before and after using process writing as a method of teaching was significantly different. Similarly, Zamel [9] discussed that when learners used the writing process in their compositions, their qualities of composition would improve. Thus, it can be said that there was effectiveness of using the writing process as a method of teaching English compositions. Regarding students' vocabulary development, the students could produce more academic words in the post-test.

These words indicated students' improvement in writing. From the result, this study supports Tharvarayus [10] study. Tharvarayus [10] discussed that if there was development of lexical use in students' compositions, the amount of words used in Base List Three, academic words, should be found more in the post-test than those in the pre-test. Hence, there was an improvement in terms of students' vocabulary used in this study. In brief, the results revealed that there was effectiveness of using the writing process as a method of teaching compositions. That is, the students could present their competence in writing through overall writing quality, and vocabulary development in their compositions. Indeed, the students' post-test directly pointed out significant improvement in all objectives of the study. Moreover, application is presented. The beneficial outcome of the use of the writing process on the improvement of students' writing may encourage English teachers to use the writing process as a method of teaching compositions to their writing classes, and from the results of this study, there was a development of academic words used in students' compositions. Thus, teachers should encourage students to concentrate on learning the academic words so that they will automatically remember and use these words in their writing. Besides, suggestions for further studies are also revealed. In this research, there were only 263 participants. Therefore, this teaching method should be applied to a bigger group of participants, and used as a method of teaching compositions to other levels of students, for instance, students in high schools or graduate schools.

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