

Effects of Using Haiku Poems on Descriptive Paragraph Writing for EFL Learners

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effects of using haiku poems on descriptive paragraph writing for EFL Learners. Lesson plans using haiku poem and achievement test were implemented to measure the impact of haiku poems on descriptive paragraph writing. This study found that the EFL learners gained higher post-test mean scores after engaging in descriptive paragraph writing along with haiku poems strategies. The frequencies of the language features and analysis the number of mistakes made by the students in their descriptive paragraph writing ability achievement tests after learning were lower than the mistake before learning. The findings determined a positive influence of haiku composition on the development of the descriptive paragraph writing skills of the participants of the study.

Keywords: Haiku Poems, Descriptive, Paragraph Writing

Introduction

Writing skills have become part of the curriculum in Thailand, especially in junior and senior high schools. In junior high school, the program is expected students to be able to compose some kinds of text, such as descriptive,

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expository, argumentative and narrative text. There are types of text that have completely different functions and characteristics. By learning the texts, the students are expanded their insight. However, descriptive writing is one category of text that junior high school students could learn from these four writing styles. According to Barbara F. Clouse (2006), descriptive is one type of text that will be used to convey the thoughts and experiences of writer so that the writer can be associated with the reader. Another descriptive goal is to engage the reader with a storyline. Cynthia and Frydenberg (2008, pp. 18-20) claims that descriptive paragraph concerns the students specifically as it provides a specific description of their writing and makes it possible for the students to visualize. Thus, descriptive paragraph writing seems to build images for the reader or other words. These pictures might return from sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or perhaps feelings. It also helps in writing paragraphs and essays in a detailed and structured manner. It will additionally facilitate the students' writing to be additionally fascinating and fill with details. It strengthens students to use advanced vocabulary.

Based on the foreign language curriculum of 2008 (B.E. 2551), the aim of teaching junior high school writing is to allow the eighth students to compose a simple descriptive paragraph. They need to generate ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs and compositions. There are also other elements the students need to learn in order to construct a coherent paragraph, such as grammar, pronunciation, content, conjunction, word choice and sentence structure. Therefore, the teacher could evaluate the necessary method or technique which can be used in teaching writing, particularly in teaching descriptive text writing.

In Thai context, it is discovered that the scholars still face the issues in writing particularly in writing a descriptive paragraph. It may be difficult for learners to understand because, in daily life, descriptive paragraph is used in

school and used in specific jobs. Also, Juzwiak (2012) opines that the student's paragraph writing weakens are poorly topic sentences, poor support points, and poor connected examples. A topic sentence isn't flourishing as a result of it lacks associate adequate management conception, poses an issue, makes an announcement, and can be a fraction. Furthermore, most students lack activities to support and promote effective creative writing instruction. As a result, they have negative feelings, opinions, and attitudes toward descriptive writing. Besides, they have impacted students' writing skills because writing needs to explain the writer's ideas and/or convince others. Unfortunately, many students are not interested in creative writing about something, even though it is about their life.

To overcome the problems, it's necessary to follow current trends in writing, to apply innovations within the classroom, to create writing environments wherever students will write freely exploiting their imagination, and to modify students to accumulate writing skills that they'll use throughout their lives (Okur & Göçen, 2019). In the EFL writing classroom, it is fundamental for writing teachers to educate students how to identify and express their unique perspectives on the world, as Lida (2011, p. 2) points out, in order to develop students' written communication abilities. When these considerations fail to be attended to, the outcome is a low development of writing skills for real-life situations. Within this context, haiku composition presents itself as a valid resource for developing descriptive writing skills.

To the ideas discussed above, one has to add the fact that, within EFL classroom, a haiku poem is employed at school to stimulate students' minds to develop thought and students' creative thinking in writing. It's unremarkably accepted that it'll facilitate psychological feature as well as emotive competency. Haiku, a kind of rimless verse in Japanese poetry, features a three-line structure, alternating with 5, 7, and 5 syllables per line, accustomed

improve student writing skills. More significantly, teaching L2 haiku poetry writing will develop EFL learners' ability to specific their voiced thoughts, feelings, and selves by lingual expressing learners' own lived experiences as content for haiku (Iida, 2016b; McIlroy et al., 2015). Reading and writing poetry, as Hanauer (2012, p. 88) states, is a method of assessing the relationship between an individual's internal and external worlds through encouraging literacy practices. Composing haiku, therefore, is an efficient technique for L2 writers to develop an essential sense of voice, audience, and vital awareness of social realities. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effects of using haiku poems on descriptive paragraph writing. Specifically, there is a research question posed in this study:

What are the effects of using haiku poems on descriptive paragraph writing for EFL Learners?

Thus, the findings of this research will be beneficial for English teachers to have alternative strategies in teaching descriptive paragraph writing for EFL learners. Furthermore, EFL learners might see writing particularly writing is not difficult but interesting.

Objectives of Research

This study aimed to investigate the effects of using haiku poems on descriptive paragraph writing for EFL Learners.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study employed quasi-experimental design with a total of 36 students drawn from 121 students during 8 weeks, 2 hours per week, with 16 hours period. The research procedure aimed to investigate the effects of using Haiku poems on students' writing ability in descriptive paragraph writing. Haiku

poems, as well as a pre-test and post-test, were used in the experimental class. As a result, the researcher interested in learning whether or not using haiku poems improves students' ability to write descriptive paragraphs.

Participants

The participants were selected students from Mathayomsuksa 2 and enrolled in English Reading and Writing for 16 hours that consists of integrated skills and language teaching during the second semester of academic year 2021. As a consequence, the results of this study cannot be applied to other learners in various settings in other areas of Thailand. The research used a random sampling strategy with a lottery system to identify 36 students as samples. They were divided into two groups: experimental and control (18 students in each group).

Instruments

1. Writing ability achievement tests

The purpose of a writing ability achievements tests used before learning through haiku poems is to establish the students' writing baseline, although the writing ability achievements tests used after learning to see how students' writing skills had improved. In this research, the writing ability achievements tests were in the form of a written test consisting of an imaginative topic. Students were asked to write a descriptive paragraph to retell about favorite place or school environment. The students must answer the test related to report text. In order to know if the contents of the test items given have validity, the researcher checked the content of the test with the content of the Thai Basic Education Core Curriculum of 2008.

2. Lesson plans using Haiku poems

The researcher designed the lesson plans using eighth haiku poems on descriptive paragraph writing based on the four core components proposed by descriptive writing model adapted from Gould (1999), Graham and Harris (2007), Spencer (2005) and Peha (2003) created a combination of experience and skill practice for students (Hyland, 2003, p. 116).

Data Collection

The experimental group in this study participated in writing activities that included the use of the instructional plans using haiku poems on descriptive paragraph writing, the researcher asked the students to take the writing ability achievements tests to measure the students' writing proficient prior to the implementation of the haiku pomes as a media. The test involved writing descriptive paragraph writing on the topic provided. The researcher explained the reasons for taking the pre-test to the students that the results from the test would be a baseline for comparing the students' progress in writing paragraph and the development of content, organization, creative writing, understanding of Haiku poem and linguistic feature.

During the eight-week period, instructional plans were offered in order to enhance the students' writing ability in descriptive paragraph writing through haiku poems composition. First of all, the researcher implemented eight verified instructional plans together with worksheets for each lesson. The instructional plans included 4 stages of writing according to communicative language teaching principles: preparing for pre-writing, acquiring for whilst writing, practicing for post- writing and assessing for writing outcome. Each instructional plan lasted for 2 hours. The first instructional plans covered teaching and learning the world of haiku. The second lesson plan presented descriptive writing. The last six lesson plans dealt with writing descriptive paragraph using haiku poems. The data was gained from the students' writing quality measured by four raters using "Descriptive Paragraph Writing Assessment Rubric" (Adapted from Brown, 2007). Lastly, the post-test was administered to examine the students' writing ability in descriptive paragraph writing after learning haiku poems.

Data Analysis

To mark the essay-based tests, a validated rubric for writing from Stanny and Nilson (2014) was employed, which measured four criteria on the

basis of a 0 - 4 scale: content, organization, creative writing, understanding of haiku poem and linguistic feature. The pre-test and post-test results were statistically analyzed by a professional in the area using the specialized software SPSS software. The descriptive analysis took into account mean paired and independent t-test to examine the Thai EFL students' descriptive paragraph writing after engaging in haiku poems activities. Moreover, this analysis also considered the number of mistakes related to content, organization, creative writing, understanding of haiku poem and linguistic feature that were identified in the pre and post - tests.

Results of Research

1. Analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test

A performance comparison between the pre and post-intervention tests shown in table 1, which also included the means and standard deviation, and then mean scores of the writing pretest and posttest of participants in the experimental group were compared using a paired t-test in order to investigate the effectiveness of the pre-writing activities on students' writing ability.

Table 1 A comparison of the overall mean scores on pre-test and post-test of the Experimental group

Tests	N	\bar{X}	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	18	6.78	2.074	18.11	.000
Post-test	18	15.00	2.376		

Note: *Significance level of 0.05 ($p < .05$)

The results in table 1 shown that the students' post-test scores of descriptive paragraph writing were significantly higher than of the pre-test at the significant level of 0.05 ($t = 18.11$) after the students learned how to write a descriptive paragraph writing adopting the haiku poems. Statistical analysis

showed the mean of the pre-test scores was 6.78 (SD = 2.074). After engaging in the English learning activities which included haiku poems over the eight-week period, the mean of the post-test scores had increased to 15.00 (SD = 2.376). The scores were likely to show that the students had improved in a writing descriptive paragraph.

2. Analysis of the individual student's balanced relative gain scores on Pretest and Posttest

Based on the analysis of pre-test and post-test scores, it could be determined that the participants improved upon their descriptive paragraph writing skills after learning through haiku poems and the trends of the individual student's improvement were shown in figure 1. Figure 1 below also illustrated the comparison of the mean scores of pre-test and posttest of experimental group.

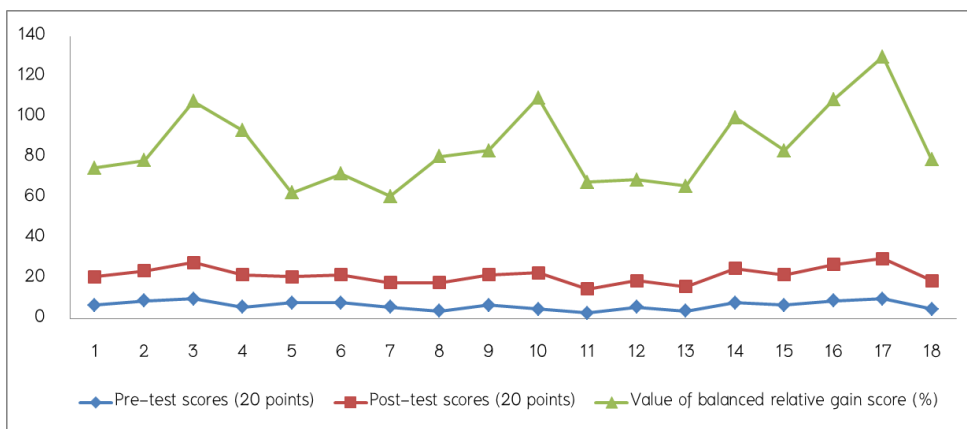


Figure 1 A Comparisons of the individual student's improvement on Pretest and Posttest

The result in figure 1 indicated the trend of the students' descriptive paragraph writing evolution from the beginning to the end of the instruction implementation. The figure suggested that the scores gained from the descriptive paragraph writing test after the completion of instructional plans were higher than the ones before. These scores seemed to reveal the improvement in the students' descriptive paragraph writing.

3. The number of identified mistakes found in the pre and post

The results of language features and analysis the number of mistakes made by the students in their descriptive paragraph writing ability achievement tests are shown in table 2. It was determined that the number of identified mistakes decreased in the post-test.

Table 2 Type of mistake found in the pre and post writing ability achievement tests.

Types of mistakes/ Criteria	Before Learning		After Learning	
	Frequency of mistakes (places)	Percentage of mistakes (%)	Frequency of mistakes (places)	Percentage of mistakes (%)
Content				
1. Topic and Details	27	7.5	16	4.44
Organization/Structure				
2. Identification	21	5.83	7	1.94
3. Description	25	6.94	10	2.78
Creative Writing				
4. Ideas	49	13.61	15	4.17
Understanding of Haiku Poem				
5. Voice, audience, nature and human mind	62	17.22	11	3.06
Linguistic Feature				
6. Spelling	14	3.89	12	3.33
7. Punctuation	9	2.50	7	1.94
8. Capitalization	9	2.50	3	0.83
9. Concrete language	12	3.33	9	2.50
10. literary devices – Sensory detail	10	2.78	2	0.56
Total	238	66.11	92	25.56

Table 2 shown the types of mistakes in the writing ability achievement tests before and after learning through haiku poems, based on the analysis of content, organization, creative writing, understanding of haiku poem and linguistic feature, it could be seen that the overall number of language features and aspects error analysis of the post- descriptive paragraph writing ability achievement tests (92 mistakes, 25.56%) were lower than that of the pre-test (238 mistakes, 66.11%).

Conclusion and Discussion

The effects of using Haiku poems on descriptive paragraph writing

The purpose of the first research question was to compare the students' English descriptive paragraph writing before and after learning through haiku poems for highlighting the development of students' writing abilities after the implementation. The findings suggested that the EFL learners gained better descriptive paragraph writing ability after they used and received haiku poems during the writing activities. The majority of the participants believed that haiku writing is an essential task in creating a feeling of self-expression. Composing haiku was a genre-specific form of writing that displays the writer's voice and was considered as an activity in which participants negotiate meaning in order to communicate their perspectives in texts. In this sense, in L2 writing, composing haiku could be an effective way to develop self-expression and a stronger sense of voice. This confirms previous findings reported by Marpaung (2017) that in an EFL classroom, English haiku writing could help students express their feelings; it could also be used by EFL students who were interested in Japanese literature and culture. It could also be utilized for therapeutic writing, in which patients wrote poetry to express their unpleasant emotions (Hiltunen, 2005 in Iida, 2016). Further, it could help EFL students to develop a class environment that supports positive personal, social, academic growth and created an image to relate to the vocabulary (Rodríguez, 2019).

As indicated by the number of mistakes for the Language criterion, the enhancement in this area was mainly related to the organization, creative writing, mistake reduction, understanding of haiku poem and linguistic feature development. Participants' perspectives, knowledge, processes, approaches, or techniques in haiku writing could be used to descriptive paragraph writing practice.

When comparing the results of the criteria of the rubric, it was ascertained that the understanding of haiku poem criterion displayed the least mistakes difference between the pre and post-intervention tests: 3.06%. The creative writing criterion was second in this regard with a difference of 4.17%. This circumstance emphasizes the beneficial effects of haiku composing on haiku poetry comprehension and creative writing. As argued by Hanauer (2012), the creative writing also allowed second/foreign language learners to openly express their ideas without having to think about grammatical rules, and thus helped to make their writing fluent. Similarly, one should consider that the enhancement in this area was mainly related to two main causes: the structural constrains of haiku, namely the 5-7-5 syllables pattern and the meaningful use of language items that poetry composition facilitates lida (2011, 2012).

The results of the content and organization also illustrated the evidence that L2 haiku composition had positive impacts on the awareness of self-expression. The improvement in terms of organization should be seen as a result of the heightened attention to the writing process carried on by haiku writing (lida, 2010). This enhanced awareness could be attributed to the haiku writing process and the associated editing efforts. Furthermore, as observed by lida (2011), the improvement in the organization criteria could be related to other claimed benefits of haiku writing, such as the strengthening of certain genre-specific writing abilities and knowledge, and the transfer of specialized literacy skills. Additionally, various potential benefits of poetry composition, such as vocabulary enrichment, increased audience awareness, and enhanced understanding of the writing process, had inspired improvement in content.

With regard to linguistic feature, the statistical analysis of the test results also revealed that writing haiku had a beneficial influence on accuracy. These results, furthermore, were in straightforward agreement with what had

been reported in the pertinent literature concerning linguistic awareness and grammatical competence development (Lazar, 1993; Kirkgöz, 2008; Panavelil, 2011; Iida, 2011;). The mistake count statistical analysis also confirmed the positive effect of haiku composition on accuracy, as the categories with the greatest contrast between the pre and post-test were spelling and concrete language. The reason behind this circumstance could be found on a heightened awareness of the writing process and the use of meaningful language that poetry composing encourages. This finding offered some empirical support to Hanauer (2011b, p. 83) literacy transfer theory, according to literacy skills in poetry writing, such as metaphor handling, linguistic structure awareness, conciseness of expression, imagistic description, emotional communication, and a variety of other possibilities, could overlap with literacy skills in other genres of writing. It also emphasized the significance of writing haiku in multidisciplinary contexts as evidence of L2 literacy development as seen from the perspective of multiple styles of writing across the curriculum.

Evidence from this study suggested that the more exposure to EFL learner haiku composition there was, the higher the perceived writing ability in descriptive paragraph writing. Composing haiku could be an effective influence on creative writing, organization, writing process consciousness, and linguistic competence. The conclusion that ensued, therefore, was that haiku composition practices had a positive effect on the development of the descriptive writing skills of the EFL learners involved in this research study; in fact, the statistical analysis, specifically the t-test of the results, indicated that this beneficial influence was significant.

Besides, the fact that the participants of the study were able to gain more confidence and were motivated as well as having more interest in writing practices. The evidence also implied that “Creating haiku helped EFL students learn to write effectively and developed vocabulary since this highly organized form needs close attention to the choosing of the suitable words to represent certain emotions,” (Aladini & Heydarpour, 2016, p.50). Certainly,

the benefits of haiku writing could inspire students' creativity and awareness of themselves and their environment. During the writing process, students could engage in integrated language learning activities that allowed them to practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities independently or cooperatively. As a result, haiku writing can be employed as part of a writing class's syllabus or preparation to help students enhance their literacy and, in the future, their descriptive writing. The concept of employing haiku to stimulate and enhance students' creative writing skills can be utilized as a model for EFL students to produce poetry in their native language. This can assist EFL students in using and preserving such languages, as educational goals currently also include the maintenance of local cultures, languages, and wisdoms. Furthermore, to encourage EFL students in developing audience awareness as a style of poetry writing in the EFL classroom, as well as the applicability of haiku as a research method in L2 writing research. Students' communicative ability will be developed through teaching poetry writing to EFL students. The reader-centered characteristic of the medium was the explanation for this increased attention to the audience when composing haiku; that was, as in any other form of poetry, haiku relied on figurative language to communicate meaning; therefore, the writer should always keep in mind the various interpretations that a possible reader could have. Additionally, as previously said, literacy skill transfer was an essential characteristic of poetry writing; hence, the thought that occurred when writing haiku was likely to be present when writing other forms of writings.

New body of knowledge

The present study demonstrated a new body of knowledge of students' descriptive paragraph writing using haiku poems by adapting the descriptive writing activity from Gould (1999), Graham and Harris (2007), Spencer (2005) and Peha (2003) for the purpose of Mathayomsuksa 2

students enrolled in English Reading and Writing class using pre, during, and post descriptive paragraph writing activities. Through lesson plans employing haiku poems, the suggested task was applied and examined in order to improve EFL learners' writing as well as to fill a gap in the current body of knowledge in descriptive paragraph writing assignment. Lesson plans using haiku is presented in this figure 2 as follow:

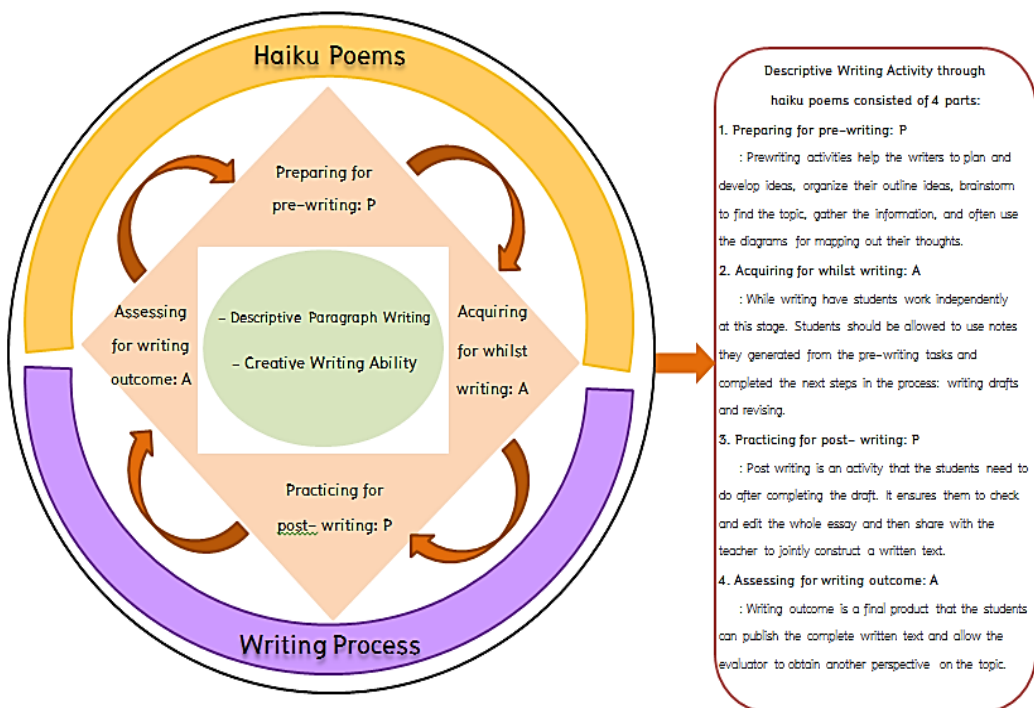


Figure 2 Model of Descriptive Writing Activity Adapted from Gould (1999), Graham and Harris (2007), Spencer (2005) and Peha (2003).

Suggestions for Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, it showed that haiku composing practices had a significant impact on the development of EFL learners' descriptive paragraph writing skills. However, some advices for further researches are provided as follows.

1. This study focused on the effects of using Haiku poems on improving the students' writing ability in descriptive paragraph writing. Hence, it will be beneficial to find out whether the use of the same or different techniques with students' ability to write other genres such as narrative, comparison and contrast, argumentative, cause and effect, classification essay, etc. has similar or different results.

2. To shed more light on the potential of descriptive paragraph writing in improving multiple language abilities, a research combining other language skills such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking using other poetry or approaches will also be valuable.

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