

Guidelines for Improving English Writing Skills of Grade 10 Students at San Eik Government High School in Wakema Town of Myanmar

Ven Gunavansa¹, Narongchai Pintrymool² and Lalita Pimrat³

Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand

Corresponding Author, Email: ¹guna121326@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aimed to (1) investigate English writing problems of Grade 10 students and (2) propose practical instructional guidelines for improving their English writing skills. The study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The population consisted of Grade 10 students at a government high school in Wakema Town, Myanmar, and a sample of 60 students was selected using purposive sampling. Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained from teacher interviews.

The findings revealed that students experienced moderate difficulties in major components of English writing, including grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and all stages of the writing process (planning, drafting, and revising). Among these difficulties, limited vocabulary knowledge and insufficient understanding of the writing process were identified as the most significant problems, which hindered students' ability to produce coherent and accurate written texts.

Based on the findings, the study proposed instructional guidelines aligned with the research objectives. These guidelines emphasized systematic grammar instruction, vocabulary development, focused practice on spelling and punctuation, explicit teaching of the writing process, and increased opportunities for guided writing practice with constructive feedback. The study concluded that the proposed guidelines could effectively enhance students' English writing performance and support improved writing instruction in similar secondary school contexts.

Keywords: Guideline; Improving; English Writing Skills; Grade 10 Students; Government High School

Introduction

Man is a social animal that lives in interrelation with one another in the world. They cannot live alone. In their daily life, they are interdependent in many aspects and communicate with each other. To communicate with one another and express their thoughts, ideas, and experiences, they need a medium among them, which is known as language

Language is a system of communication that can make us share our ideas and experiences. It allows us to easily live and cooperate with other people from different countries. It is the most distinguishing feature of human beings that differentiates humans from animals. So, language is not only a form of communication but also a form of social status.

Nowadays, English has become the most popular language and the most commonly used language among foreign languages in the world. It is also a second language in international communication. Throughout the world, when people from different language countries come together, they commonly use the English language to communicate with one another. Most of the Universities worldwide have included English as one of their major subjects or the language of instruction (Nunan, 2003). English is the language of the United Nations, international summit meetings, science, technology, business, tourism, medicine, etc. (Thu Nga, Nguyen, 2008).

Writing is one of the most important skills to be learned by all grade students in learning English. It is categorized as a productive skill along with speaking skills. Through writing, the students can use the target language communicatively, especially to express ideas, share information, and respond to any request in written form. The sentence is a combination of words, phrases and clauses expressing complete thoughts and ideas. The largest unit of grammar sentences. The sentence is composed of smaller units, clauses, and words (Leech, Reucher, and Hougenraad, 1982).

To achieve those goals, the students must have basic knowledge of writing skills, such as correct grammar, appropriate vocabulary, and the genre of the text. Grammar is the set of rules that describe how words and groups of words can be arranged to form sentences in a particular language (Ron Cowan, 2008). The ability to write paragraphs in English based on this basic knowledge will enable the students to produce proficient writing. This statement is supported by Sari and Fitrawati (2018). Writing ability requires an understanding of the elements of writing to deliver proficient writing. So, students need to master the basic knowledge of writing to reach their goals and convey meaning in written text.

Significance of the problem concerning with this title as A Guideline for Improving English Writing Skills of Grade 10 Students at San Eik Government High School in Wakema Town of Myanmar is lack of writing skill of the students because of no having material things as computer, power-point, internet etc., for teaching and learning and also the students cannot get enough teachers to learn for their education. San Eik is a village that is far from the Wakema township. Other villages near San Eik have no High school, so all students from those villages go to study at the San Eik government high school. Therefore, there are a lot of students in there, but they do not have enough teachers and enough material to study for their education. That is why the students are poor in writing skills, and that is my thesis problem concerning this title.

Therefore, the reason of the researcher requires to study this title “Guidelines for Improving English Writing Skills of Grade 10 students at San Eik Government High School in Wakema Town of Myanmar” is that researcher want to know the level of English writing skills of students and curriculum concerning with teaching and learning between teachers and students



at San Eik Government High School. This High School is in my village, so in the future, the researcher has a desire which is to improve the English writing skills of the students in the field of education. That is why, it is the reason of choice this title for the researcher.

Objectives

1. To study the problems of English writing skills of Grade 10 students at San Eik Government High School in Wakema Town of Myanmar
2. To propose the guidelines for improving the English writing skills of Grade 10 students at San Eik Government High School in Wakema Town of Myanmar

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The mixed-methods design was selected to obtain a comprehensive understanding of English writing problems and to develop instructional guidelines based on empirical evidence. The quantitative approach was used to identify the level and types of students' writing difficulties, while the qualitative approach was used to gain in-depth insights from teachers regarding instructional practices and guideline development.

Research Area

The research was conducted at a government high school located in Wakema Town, Myanmar. This setting was selected because English is taught as a compulsory subject at the secondary level, and students' writing performance remains a key concern in English language education.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of all Grade 10 students enrolled at the selected government high school during the academic year of the study. From this population, a sample of 60 Grade 10 students was selected using purposive sampling. This sampling method was appropriate because the participants shared similar academic backgrounds and had direct experience with English writing instruction. In addition, English language teachers who taught Grade 10 students were selected as key informants for the qualitative component of the study.

Research Instruments

Two types of research instruments were used in this study.

1. Questionnaire The questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from students. It was designed to examine students' problems in English writing skills, including grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and the stages of the writing process (planning, drafting, and revising).

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in English language teaching. Reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.84, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

2. Interview Form A semi-structured interview form was used to collect qualitative data from English teachers. The interview questions focused on teachers' perceptions of students' writing problems and their suggestions for improving students' writing skills. The interview format allowed flexibility for teachers to elaborate on their experiences while maintaining consistency across interviews.

Data Collection

Data was collected over a four-month period, from June to September 2023. Quantitative data was obtained through the administration of questionnaires to student participants. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with English teachers. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity, were strictly observed throughout the data collection process.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. These statistical techniques were appropriate for summarizing students' writing problems and identifying overall trends.

Qualitative data from teacher interviews were analyzed using document analysis and thematic analysis. The data were transcribed, coded, and categorized into themes related to writing problems and instructional guidelines. The qualitative findings were then synthesized and presented in a descriptive narrative to complement the quantitative results.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were integrated during the interpretation stage. This integration enabled the researcher to triangulate findings and develop practical instructional guidelines grounded in both numerical data and teachers' professional insights.

Results

The results of a study of guidelines for improving the English writing skills of Grade 10 students at San Eik government high school in Wakema Town of Myanmar were presented with each objective as follows:

Objective 1 To Study English Writing Problems of Grade 10 Students

The first objective of this study was to investigate the English writing problems of Grade 10 students. The findings revealed that students experienced a moderate level of difficulty across all major components of English writing, including grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and the stages of the writing process. These results indicate that students' writing problems were not isolated but interconnected, affecting both linguistic accuracy and overall text quality.



One of the most significant problems identified was vocabulary limitation. Students reported difficulty selecting appropriate words to express their ideas clearly and precisely. Limited vocabulary knowledge restricted their ability to elaborate ideas and develop coherent paragraphs, often resulting in repetitive or incomplete sentences. This finding is consistent with Nguyen (2008), who found that insufficient lexical resources hinder EFL learners' writing development, particularly at the secondary school level.

In addition to vocabulary limitations, grammatical inaccuracy was identified as a major challenge. Students frequently struggled with sentence structure, verb tense usage, and subject-verb agreement. These grammatical problems often led to unclear meaning and fragmented writing. Cowan (2008) emphasized that weak grammatical competence can significantly reduce the clarity and effectiveness of students' written texts, which aligns with the findings of the present study.

Furthermore, students demonstrated difficulties with spelling and punctuation, which contributed to reduced readability of their writing. Incorrect spelling often caused misunderstandings, while improper use of punctuation affected sentence boundaries and paragraph organization. These findings support Leech, Deuchar, and Hoogenraad (1982), who argued that accuracy in spelling and punctuation is essential for effective written communication.

Another important issue identified was students' limited understanding of the writing process. Many students reported that they rarely planned their writing before starting and seldom revised their drafts after completion. This lack of awareness of planning, drafting, and revising stages resulted in poorly organized texts with minimal improvement across drafts. Nunan (2003) noted that students who are not explicitly taught the writing process often treat writing as a one-step activity, leading to weak organization and limited idea development. Overall, the findings for Objective 1 demonstrate that students' writing problems stem from both linguistic limitations and inadequate writing strategies.

Objective 2 To Examine Factors Contributing to English Writing Difficulties

The second objective of this study aimed to examine factors contributing to students' English writing difficulties. The results indicated that several instructional and contextual factors played a crucial role in shaping students' writing performance, particularly insufficient practice opportunities, limited instructional time, and lack of systematic feedback.

Students reported that writing activities were often confined to short classroom exercises, with limited opportunities for extended writing practice. As a result, students had little chance to apply grammatical knowledge and vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Leech et al. (1982) emphasized that writing proficiency develops through continuous practice and gradual reinforcement, suggesting that limited practice may impede students' writing development.

Another contributing factor identified was limited instructional time allocated to writing instruction. Writing was often integrated into broader language lessons without sufficient focus on skill development. This finding is consistent with Nunan (2003), who argued that writing requires

sustained instructional attention and cannot be effectively developed through occasional activities alone.

The results also revealed that lack of constructive feedback significantly affected students' writing improvement. Many students reported receiving minimal or general feedback that did not clearly indicate specific areas for improvement. Without detailed feedback, students were unable to identify recurring errors or revise their writing effectively. Hyland and Hyland (2006) highlighted the critical role of feedback in writing development, noting that effective feedback helps learners understand their weaknesses and develop revision strategies.

Additionally, students' limited exposure to English outside the classroom contributed to their writing difficulties. In an EFL context such as Myanmar, opportunities to use English authentically are limited, which may further restrict students' writing development. Nguyen (2008) emphasized that limited exposure to the target language outside formal instruction can slow progress in writing proficiency. Taken together, the findings for Objective 2 suggest that students' writing difficulties are influenced by a combination of instructional constraints and contextual factors rather than individual ability alone.

Objective 3 To Propose Instructional Guidelines for Improving English Writing Skills

The third objective of this study was to propose instructional guidelines for improving students' English writing skills based on the research findings. The results suggest that effective improvement requires a comprehensive and systematic instructional approach that addresses both linguistic knowledge and writing strategies.

First, the findings emphasize the importance of explicit instruction in grammar and vocabulary. Teachers should systematically teach grammatical structures and lexical items and provide opportunities for students to apply them in writing tasks. Nunan (2003) advocated integrating language form and meaning in writing instruction to support accuracy and fluency.

Second, the study highlights the need to explicitly teach the writing process, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Guiding students through each stage can help them organize ideas, develop coherent paragraphs, and improve overall text quality. Cowan (2008) noted that process-based writing instruction enhances students' ability to revise and refine their writing effectively.

Third, the findings stress the importance of regular writing practice and constructive feedback. Teachers should provide frequent writing tasks and offer specific feedback focusing on both content and language use. According to Hyland (2003), feedback that addresses meaning as well as form plays a vital role in promoting sustained improvement in writing performance.

Finally, the proposed guidelines emphasize creating a supportive learning environment that encourages students to view writing as a developmental process rather than a one-time product. By reducing anxiety related to making mistakes and providing continuous support, teachers can foster greater confidence and motivation among students. Overall, the guidelines derived from this study provide practical directions for improving English writing instruction in secondary school contexts.



In summary, the findings of this study indicate that Grade 10 students faced moderate English writing difficulties due to linguistic limitations, insufficient practice opportunities, and lack of systematic feedback. Addressing these challenges requires instructional practices that integrate language knowledge, writing strategies, and supportive feedback. The results provide empirical support for the proposed instructional guidelines and offer valuable implications for improving English writing instruction in similar EFL contexts.

New Body of Knowledge

This research contributes new body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the nature of English writing difficulties among Grade 10 students in an EFL context and by integrating these findings into practical instructional guidelines. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on identifying isolated writing problems, this study demonstrates that students' writing difficulties are the result of an interconnected set of linguistic limitations and instructional factors. Specifically, the findings reveal that weaknesses in vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and limited awareness of the writing process collectively shape students' overall writing performance.

Furthermore, this study advances existing knowledge by highlighting the role of instructional conditions, particularly insufficient writing practice, limited instructional time, and lack of systematic feedback, as key contributors to writing difficulties. By linking students' writing problems directly to classroom practices, the research moves beyond descriptive analysis and offers a clearer explanation of why such problems persist in secondary school EFL settings.

Another important contribution of this study lies in the development of context-specific instructional guidelines grounded in empirical data. The proposed guidelines emphasize explicit grammar and vocabulary instruction, process-based writing pedagogy, and continuous feedback as an integrated framework for improving writing skills. This integration of linguistic knowledge, writing strategies, and pedagogical support represents a practical model that can be applied in similar educational contexts.

Overall, the new body of knowledge generated by this research lies in its holistic approach to understanding English writing difficulties and its evidence-based instructional recommendations, which contribute both theoretical insights and practical implications for improving English writing instruction in secondary education.

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