

Effects of 6+1 Trait Writing Model on Thai EFL Student Writing Achievements

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Abstract

English writing is a crucial problem in the Thai EFL context as learners are required to produce accurate output in terms of both vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, there should be alternative methods to solve problems in the context as it might benefit Thai EFL development. The current study aimed 1) to investigate the effect of the 6+1 trait writing model on Thai EFL students' writing achievements and 2) to investigate students' attitudes toward the 6+1 trait writing model. The participants were 34 EFL students in Thailand selected by the purposive sampling method. The instruments were the 6+1 trait writing model with 8 weeks of implementation, pre and post-writing achievement tests, rubric assessment for writing achievement, and a questionnaire. The statistics used in data analysis were Mean Score, Standard Deviation, and t-test (dependent sample). The results of the study showed that 1) there was a significant difference between students' writing achievements in pre and post-test with the statistical level of .05 ($p=0.00$) and 2) students' attitudes toward the 6+1 trait writing model were found at the high level ($\bar{x}= 4.18$). It could be concluded that the 6+1 trait writing model had positive effects on Thai EFL students' writing both in terms of writing achievements and attitudes toward learning.

Keywords: English Writing, Writing Achievement, 6+1 trait writing model

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ผลของการใช้รูปแบบการสอนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยวิธีคุณสมบัติ 6+1 ในการพัฒนาผลสัมฤทธิ์ของการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาผู้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศในประเทศไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

การเขียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นปัญหาสำคัญในการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศในประเทศไทยเนื่องจากผู้เรียนถูกคาดหวังให้สร้างผลผลิตทางภาษา (Output) ที่มีความถูกต้องและแม่นยำสูง ดังนั้นการนำทางเลือกใหม่ๆ เข้ามาแก้ปัญหาและพัฒนาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษจึงเป็นเรื่องสำคัญในการพัฒนาการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาผลของการใช้รูปแบบการสอนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยวิธีคุณสมบัติ 6+1 ในการพัฒนาผลสัมฤทธิ์ของการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาผู้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศในประเทศไทย และ 2) ศึกษาทัศนคติของนักศึกษาที่มีต่อรูปแบบการสอนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยวิธีคุณสมบัติ 6+1 กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้แก่ นักศึกษาผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศในประเทศไทยจำนวน 34 คน โดยสุ่มจากวิธีเฉพาะเจาะจง (Purposive Sampling Method) เครื่องมือวิจัยได้แก่ รูปแบบการสอนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยวิธีคุณสมบัติ 6+1 จำนวน 8 ชั่วโมง แบบทดสอบผลสัมฤทธิ์การเขียนภาษาอังกฤษก่อนและหลังเรียน แบบประเมินผลสัมฤทธิ์การเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ และ แบบสอบถาม สถิติที่ใช้ได้แก่ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และ t-test (dependent sample) ผลการวิจัยพบว่านักศึกษาที่มีผลสัมฤทธิ์ในการเขียนหลังเรียนแตกต่างกับผลสัมฤทธิ์ในการเขียนก่อนเรียนอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ .05 ($p=0.00$) และนักศึกษามีทัศนคติต่อการใช้รูปแบบการสอนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยวิธีคุณสมบัติ 6+1 ในระดับดี ($\bar{x}=4.18$) สามารถสรุปได้ว่าได้แก่ รูปแบบการสอนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยวิธีคุณสมบัติ 6+1 ส่งผลดีต่อการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศในประเทศไทยทั้งในด้านผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียนและด้านการเสริมสร้างทัศนคติ

คำสำคัญ : การเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ, ผลสัมฤทธิ์ในการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ, คุณสมบัติ 6+1

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Introduction

Writing is an important skill for learners of English. The skill not only allows them to express meaning through texts but also leads them to success in both academic and occupational matters (Silva, 1993). Learners with competent English writing could use the skills in a career such as writing a memorandum, report, business letter, etc. Moreover, such academic documents as thesis, academic articles, and research papers also require good commands of English writing to complete (William, 2012). However, writing is considered one of the most difficult skills in English since learners have to deal with several complicated rules such as grammar, punctuation, choices of words, and mechanics. In addition, they also have to consider the organizational factors of the composition. Therefore, it does not become a surprise that learners in the EFL context have serious problems with several aspects of writing.

In order to deal with the problems, the Thai government has put attempts to improve Thai learners' English skills from the very beginning of the educational processes. According to the basic education core curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2008), learners have to be instructed the language since the first grade of primary school which is changed from the previous core curriculum that requested learners to start learning in grade 5. Moreover, English has to be instructed for all students learning at the higher education level as a general education subject (Office of Higher Education Commission, 2009). However, these attempts turn out not to be effective as Thai learners still have problems with general English. Most Thai population still lack abilities in communicating in English, and Thailand is at the bottom of the table of English proficiency among ASEAN countries (Kongkerd, 2013).

Concerning the current situation, English writing is predictably one of the serious problems found in the Thai EFL context. Since the skill mainly requests accuracy in using rules of grammar and vocabulary, Thai learners who barely use English in daily communication face greater difficulties when they are asked to write. Considered factors in the Thai EFL context, three main reasons could be illustrated.

First, The distance between Thai and English languages. Originated from different roots, the two languages share fewer rules and vocabulary (Iwasaki & Ingkapirom, 2005). Therefore, learners might be interfered with by the rules of the mother language which could confuse them and lead to errors in the uses of grammar. Furthermore, Thai and English share only a few cognate words. For this reason, Thais have to acquire a great number of vocabulary to use the language effectively. According to Waring and Nation (1997), as many as 3,000-word families have to be learned by an L2 learner to use English effectively.

Secondly, the context of Thailand does not support opportunities for learning for Thai EFL learners. Most Thai learners only have chances to expose to English in classes. However, they have limited opportunities to use English on a daily basis. Thailand a country with its own official language. Therefore, Thai is used to expressing meaning in both media and government documents. Therefore, problems in English learning could be an account of a lack of experience in encountering the language in real life.

Lastly, let alone using English in daily life activities. Thai learners also have limited English uses in classes. Thai EFL teaching has been criticized to be problematic in the way that it focuses on teaching grammatical structures without authentic practices of English (Kongkerd, 2013). Moreover, the tests in schools are mainly designed in multiple choices. This encourages learners to focus on remembering salient grammatical structures that could help them overcome the multiple-choice grammar tests. Unfortunately, this is not beneficial when it comes to producing languages in real communication both in terms of speaking and writing (Klibthong, 2012).

For these reasons, Thai EFL learners facing difficulties in language rule, limited opportunities to practice, and doubtful teaching methods, are found to make mistakes in writing in terms of both grammatical structures, uses of vocabulary, and organization. According to Kaweera (2013), one of the Thai learners' core problems in writing is lack of the knowledge that could guide them to create a good piece of writing. To illustrate, they do not know what it takes to write a composition. Therefore, they cannot monitor themselves when they do mistakes. For example, in a paragraph writing course, it is

difficult for learners without the knowledge of an organization to create a paragraph. They can't indicate their mistakes, and eventually, it leads to mistakes in writing.

In conclusion, teaching learners to understand the components of good writing becomes an important factor contributing to learners' writing achievement. Instructional methods that could encourage students to create linguistic features to fulfill the components of good writing and at the same time stimulate them to monitor their own written language production might be a solution to problems in EFL writing which is one of the most serious problems in the Thai context. The current study applied the 6+1 trait writing model (Coe et al., 2011) to develop Thai EFL students' writing achievement at the paragraph level aiming to develop 7 main areas including ideas, organization, voices, word choices, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation.

Literature Review

1. 6+1 trait Writing Model

According to Coe et al. (2011), the 6+1 trait writing model is defined as the instruction of 7 major components that contribute to a good piece of writing. It also includes detailed criteria of what is expected to be featured in each component of good writing. The criteria are given as monitoring guidance for students to check whether their composition met the goal of writing or not. The detail of each trait could be seen below.

Ideas

The aspect of Ideas is defined as the quality of ideas expressed through the composition. A qualified idea should be unique and interesting. For example, in narrative writing about their birthday, students should give the ideas that contribute to the attractiveness of the story. The plain sequences of what they did on the day are not interesting ideas to present. The idea aspect covers both topic sentences and supporting details.

Organization: Organization refers to the state that students provide all elements of the composition. For example, in paragraph writing, topic sentences, supporting sentences, and conclusion should be included in a paragraph. In essay writing, an introduction, body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph are expected to be

presented. Even in free writing, beginning, middle, and ending parts should be clearly identified.

Voice: Voice of the composition refers to the ability of writers in expressing emotion and opinions. The writers having qualified voices can use language to draw out emotional appeal. This could be justified by the uses of phrasal verbs, prepositional phrases, and sentence modification.

Word Choices: Vocabulary is another important aspect of writing. The preciseness of word uses that could reflect the through the meaning of sentences could contribute word choice aspect. Moreover, the use of more sophisticated words should also be considered as a word choice skill.

Sentence Fluency: Sentence fluency in the 6+ 1 trait writing model refers to the ability to use divert grammatical structures. Texts should be written in varied sentence structures and grammatical features. Moreover, the connectivity of sentences could also support sentence fluency of the composition.

Convention: Convention could be clarified as the structural accuracy of the composition. This includes spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar/ usage, and paragraphing. Composition with convention could indicate knowledge of writers as well as their carefulness.

Presentation: The trait is the “+ 1” aspect of the model as it does not focus on linguistic features. Even though a piece of writing is normally justified by its organizational and grammatical aspects, it could not be rejected that the appearance of the composition could also be considered as a component of good writing. The presentation covers spaces, handwriting, graphic uses, and the idea in the information presented.

2. Theoretical Framework

6+ 1 trait writing model as outcome-based approach: Rather than giving sets of knowledge related to the topic of learning, the outcome-based approach focuses on clearly specify the expected outcomes of the course (Harden, 2007). According to the author, the outcome-based approach benefits learners in the way that it notifies learners to set goals of learning. In this manner, learners could stay focus to achieve

course requirements. 6+ 1 trait specifies the demand of writing by informing learners of core components of writing and the scale of evaluation criteria. Theoretically, learners could focus on improving their writing ability in each trait to fulfill the demand of writing courses. They could also check whether their writing quality reaches the standard or not by reading the giving criteria. Therefore, the model is supposed to support the development of learners' writing.

6+ 1 in noticing hypothesis: According to Schmidt (2001), learners of a new language could not learn grammatical features without noticing that they are using it. Likewise, they could not learn how to write in English without knowing the components of good writing. Directly instruct components of good writing in terms of grammatical, organizational, lexical, and visual aspects would contribute to noticing and leads to acquisition eventually.

3. Previous Studies

As the model is theoretically supported by both principles in language teaching and second language acquisition, studies have been conducted to give empirical evidence to the 6+ 1 trait writing model. The results of the previous studies spotlighted the benefits of the model in developing learners' writing achievement in both L1 and L2 contexts.

Turkovitz (2003) conducted a study on the effects of the trait model on 33 L1 students learning English writing. The result of one group experimental designed study showed that the students could reach learning achievement after being instructed by the methods. De Jarnette (2008) studied the effects of the model on L1 students in the states. A quasi-experimental study was conducted with one experimental group include schools that applied the model in their writing classes and one control group employing original writing instruction. The result of the study indicates that students in the schools of the experimental group could reach writing achievement while a significant difference between the two groups was found at .05. Spalding et al. (2009) studied the effects of the 6+ 1 writing trait model on the writing achievements focusing on voice trait. 57 Chinese EFL students were chosen as participants of the study. The result of the study

indicated a positive effect of the model on the use of voices in students' writing. Qoura & Zahran (2018) studied the effects of the model on 70 EFL Egyptian students. A quasi-experimental designed study was conducted with an experimental group learning with a 6+ 1 trait writing model and a control group learning with the traditional teaching. The result of the study showed a positive effect of the model on all writing traits.

4. This study

Writing is an important skill in the EFL context. However, due to the demanding requirements of the skill, it is difficult for L2 learners to master the skill. Theoretically supported by both teaching and applied linguistic theories, the 6+ 1 trait writing model could be an alternative to solve the problems in the Thai context. Moreover, the model is supported by the results of the previous studies. The current study employed the model to develop the writing achievement of Thai students. The research questions were set as follows (1) What is the effect of the 6+ 1 trait writing model on Thai EFL students' writing achievements? and (2) What are the students' attitudes toward the 6+1 trait writing model?

Research Methodology

Participants: The participants were 34 Thai EFL students at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University. They enrolled in the Paragraph Writing course. The participants' English proficiency was at a lower intermediate level. The participants participated in the research project in the first semester of the 2018 academic year. All of the data collection processes were done considering the privacy of participants.

Research Instruments

6 +1 trait writing model: The 6+1 writing model was integrated into the course. In the Paragraph Writing course, students were expected to be able to compose paragraphs with the components of the topic, topic sentence, supporting sentences, conclusion, and transition. 7 traits in the model namely; ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, convention, and presentation were included in the course. Students were taught to understand the importance of each component. They were

also given the rubric criteria to evaluate themselves. However, due to the limited English proficiency of the students, the rubric was used as an explanation tool in the feedback processes. The processes of the 6+1 trait writing model lasted 8 weeks.

Pre-test and post-test: The study was designed into one group experiment research. Pre-test and post-test were assigned to investigate students' performance before and after learning with the 6+1 trait writing model. The tests were paragraph writing tests in the narrative genre. The topics were set as "Life in Primary School" in the pre-test and "Unforgettable Events" in the post-test.

Rubric Scoring: Students' writing performances were evaluated by K-2 rubric scoring (Education Northwest, 2018). The rubric was originally introduced for L1 younger students. With the consideration that the participants were L2 learners with lower intermediate English proficiency, the rubric should match their level. The rubric was designed in 6 scales rating students' performances on 7 traits of writing.

Questionnaire: The questionnaire was developed to study students' attitudes toward the 6+1 trait writing model. The questionnaire was assessed prior to the processes of data collection in a pilot study with 9 EFL writing students of the same proficiency level. The questionnaire consists of 12 question items related to students' attitudes toward the model in improving 4 issues namely grammar, organization, vocabulary, and cohesion their paragraph writing abilities. The questionnaire was found to be at 0.84 of the Cronbach alpha coefficient.

Data collection and Data Analysis

The detail of data collection and data analysis could be seen in table 1.

Table 1 Data collection and Data Analysis

Data collection	Instruments	Statistics
Pre-test	Writing pre-test	Mean, S.D
Treatment	6+1 trait writing model	
Post-test	Post-test	t-test, Mean, S.D.
Attitude survey	Questionnaire	Mean, S.D.

Results of the study

1. Purpose of Study 1: The effect of the 6+1 trait writing model on Thai EFL students, the first purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of the 6+1 trait writing model on Thai EFL students. A one-group experimental designed study was conducted, and the result of the study could be seen in table 2.

Table 2. Pre and post-test

Students' performances	Mean	S.D.	t-test (p)
Pre-test	27.25	4.86	0.00
Post-test	38.89	4.32	

According to table 2, the students' performances at the beginning of the experiment were at 27.25 ($\bar{x} = 27.25$) as can be seen in the pre-test. However, after 8 weeks of 6+1 trait writing model treatment, the students could improve their writing achievements. The score of the post-test was found at 38.89. In the consideration of students' performances before and after learning with the model, there was a significant difference at the statistical level of 0.05 ($p=0.00$).

2. Purpose of Study 2: Students' attitudes toward the 6+ 1 trait writing model, the second purpose of the study was to investigate students' attitudes toward the 6+ 1 trait writing model. The data were collected by a questionnaire after the process of the post-test. The result of the study could be seen below.

Writing Aspects	Mean Score	S.D.
Grammar	4.32	0.95
Organization	4.45	0.87
Vocabulary	3.86	0.64
Cohesion	4.11	0.84
Overall	4.18	0.82

The result of the study showed that overall students' satisfaction toward the 6+1 trait writing model in developing their writing was found at a high level ($\bar{x} = 4.18$, S.D. = 0.82). In consideration of each writing aspect, it was found that organization ($\bar{x} = 4.45$, S.D. = 0.87), grammar ($\bar{x} = 4.32$, S.D. = 0.95), cohesion ($\bar{x} = 4.11$, S.D. = 0.84), and vocabulary ($\bar{x} = 3.86$, S.D. = 0.64) were found to be in a descending order.

Discussions

The results of the study showed that the 6+1 trait writing model positively affected students' writing achievements since the performances in the post-test overcame the pre-test with the significant differences at the statistical level at .05. The results of the study could lead to the discussions below.

1. Effects of 6+1 trait on students' writing achievements

The result of the study indicated the positive effects of the model on Thai EFL students' writing achievements. The result of the study went along with other studies that indicated the benefit of the model on writing performances of students both in L1 and L2 context (e.g, Turkovitz, 2003; De Jarnette, 2008; Spalding et al., 2009; Qoura & Zahran, 2018). This could be explained by the theoretical supports in both pedagogical and applied linguistic aspects. The students were informed about the components of each writing trait that could lead to a good piece of a paragraph. Moreover, they could notice the component and compare their performances with the expected outcomes of the composition. Consequently, the students could improve their writing performances to reach learning achievements after being instructed with the 6+1 trait writing model. In addition, it was also noticed that the 6+1 trait writing model, originally introduced to be the model of writing teaching for younger L1 students, also positively affected the L2 learners. The results went along with the studies of Spalding et al. (2009) and Quota & Zahran (2018) who also studied the effects of the model on L2 writing. This could be explained by the fact that L1 learners in their early stages of learning were not expected to perform a piece of writing that contain complex grammatical and lexical features.

Therefore, L2 learners could follow the developmental steps and eventually improve their writing.

2. Students' attitudes toward the 6+1 trait writing model

The result of the study showed that the participants showed satisfaction level at high ($\bar{x} = 4.18$) toward the 6+1 trait writing model in developing their writing in 4 aspects including grammar, organization, vocabulary, and cohesion. The result of the study is related to De Jarnette (2008) who claimed that the model is not only beneficial for students' learning, but it also gives meaningful learning opportunities that could lead to satisfaction in learning. According to Ausubel (2000), meaningful learning refers to the transference of knowledge that occurs when learners relate new concepts to pre-existing familiar concepts. The students learning with the model were instructed to consider 7 traits of writing with their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, they could generate written output more effectively by learning with the model.

Conclusion

The results of the study could be concluded that the 6+1 trait writing model positively affected L2 writing classrooms in terms of both students' writing performances and attitudes toward learning. The result of the study could be implicated in both pedagogical and academic aspects. In terms of pedagogical contribution, it introduced an effective teaching model to L2 writing classrooms. Instructors of L2 writing could be aware of the importance of writing component instruction. Illustrating components of good composition could be a guide for students to develop themselves to reach writing achievement. Moreover, the result of the study could be empirical evidence for the 6+1 trait writing model, and it could provide empirical evidence to exemplify how outcome-based learning and noticing affect learning performance.

Limitations and Recommendations

However, the processes of the study still bare limitations. First, the proportion of the samples would not be enough to be representative of all Thai EFL students. Further

studies should be conducted with more participants. Moreover, the study was conducted in a one-group experimental design that could not give comparative evidence for students learning with the original teaching method. Further studies might add up a control group to give clearer evidence of the model effects.

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