

**The Effects of Using Pre-writing Techniques in Teaching English  
Descriptive Paragraph Writing for Students at a Private University in  
Nakhon Pathom Province**

กลวิธีการเตรียมการก่อนการเขียนในการเขียนอนุচ্ছেตเชิงพรรณนาภาษาอังกฤษของ  
นักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยเอกชนในจังหวัดนครปฐม

Shirong Guan\*\*

Kamonpan Boonkrit\*\*\*

**Abstract**

This study was basically quasi-experimental which investigated the effects of using pre-writing techniques with images on the students' descriptive paragraph writing ability of 16 students at a private university in Thailand that were selected through convenient sampling. The current study sought to determine if using pre-writing techniques with images could effectively improve the English descriptive paragraph writing of students at a private university in Nakhon Pathom. It further analyzed the students' perspectives toward using pre-writing techniques with images in improving English descriptive paragraph writing using images. The participants were taught to write English descriptive paragraphs using pre-writing

techniques with images for five weeks for a total of 15 hours. The instruments used for data collection were the English Writing Pre-Test and Post Test and the Learner's Perspective Questionnaire. Statistical Social Package for Social Sciences Version 16 (SPSS 16) measured the effects of the dependent variable on the independent variable.

It was found out in the study that using pre-writing techniques with images had helped the students generate more ideas and organized their sentences to form a paragraph. The study accepted the hypothesis that using pre-writing techniques with images can improve the English descriptive paragraph writing of students at a private university in Nakhon Pathom.

---

\*วิทยานิพนธ์ Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language มหาวิทยาลัยคริสเตียน

\*\*นักศึกษา Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language มหาวิทยาลัยคริสเตียน

\*\*\* ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์ร่วม คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

The results of the learners' perspective questionnaire revealed that students felt more confident in writing English descriptive paragraphs using images. Furthermore, it accepts the hypothesis that using

pre-writing techniques with images gave the students confidence in writing English descriptive paragraphs.

**Keywords:** using pre-writing techniques/ English descriptive paragraph writing

### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิจัยกึ่งทดลอง ซึ่งมุ่งค้นหาผลของการใช้กลวิธีการเตรียมก่อนการเขียนด้วยรูปภาพเพื่อพัฒนาความสามารถในการเขียนอนุচ্ছেตเชิงพรรณนาของนักศึกษา 16 คนที่ถูกเลือกเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างด้วยความสมัครใจ ณ มหาลัษเฐนในประเทศไทย งานวิจัยนี้ได้ค้นคว้าเพื่อที่จะทดสอบว่าการใช้กลวิธีการเตรียมก่อนการเขียนด้วยรูปภาพ สามารถพัฒนาการเขียนอนุচ্ছেตเชิงพรรณนาภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษามหาลัษเฐนในจังหวัดนครปฐมอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพหรือไม่ งานวิจัยยังวิเคราะห์เพิ่มเติมถึงทัศนคติของนักศึกษาที่มีต่อการใช้กลวิธีการเตรียมก่อนการเขียนก่อนการเขียนโดยรูปภาพ ในการพัฒนาการเขียนอนุচ্ছেตเชิงพรรณนาโดยใช้รูปภาพ กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้รับการสอนให้เขียนอนุচ্ছেตเชิงพรรณนาภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้กลวิธีการเตรียมก่อนการเขียนโดยใช้รูปภาพเป็นเวลาห้าสัปดาห์รวม 15 ชั่วโมง เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลคือการทดสอบก่อนและหลังการ

ทดสอบการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ และแบบสอบถามทัศนคติของผู้เรียน โปรแกรม Statistical Social Package for Social Sciences Version 16 (SPSS 16) ได้วัดผลกระทบของการวัดตัวแปรต้นในตัวแปรอิสระ ในการวิจัยพบว่า การใช้กลวิธีการเตรียมก่อนการเขียนกับรูปภาพได้ช่วยให้นักศึกษาสร้างความคิดและเรียบเรียงประโยคของพวกเขาในรูปแบบอนุচ্ছেตได้มากขึ้น การวิจัยได้ยอมรับสมมติฐานที่ว่า การใช้กลวิธีเตรียมการเขียนด้วยรูปภาพ สามารถพัฒนาการเขียนอนุচ্ছেตเชิงพรรณนาภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษามหาลัษเฐนในจังหวัดนครปฐม ผลของแบบสอบถามทัศนคติของผู้เรียนเผยว่า นักศึกษารู้สึกมั่นใจมากขึ้นในการเขียนอนุচ্ছেตเชิงพรรณนาภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้รูปภาพ นอกจากนั้นยังได้ยอมรับสมมติฐานที่ว่า การใช้กลวิธีการเตรียมการก่อนการเขียนด้วยรูปภาพยังเพิ่มความเชื่อมั่นของนักศึกษาในการเขียนอนุচ্ছেตเชิงพรรณนาภาษาอังกฤษ

### Introduction

The role of English in Thailand is relatively important as it is in other developing countries, especially when Thailand will be officially integrated with ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. In terms of a common language of communication for AEC members, all ten members have agreed to use English as an official language for business. Moreover, English is cited as the major

language of international business, diplomacy, science and professionals (Kitao, 1996). Such demand can be seen in business organizations requiring their employees to have highly functional language skills to be able to perform their business efficiently. Many jobs require the applicants to be fluent in English. Knowledge of English as a second language is a requirement for this decade (Pawapatcharandom, 2007).

It is inevitable that English is a principal means of communication, especially in the globalization period.

Thailand ranks near the bottom in an English proficiency survey out of 60 countries and territories where English is not their mother tongue, Thailand manages only 55th place-outdoing only Panama, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, according to the EF English proficiency index (The Nation, 2016).

Furthermore in another survey, Thailand fell to 62nd out of 70 nations in English proficiency and is now the third-worst country in Asia on Education First's annual English Proficiency Index. Education First noted that Thais still exhibit poor English skills even though the country spends a greater percentage of its budget-31.3 %-on education than any of the 70 countries it surveyed (James, 2015).

Despite the continuous efforts in developing English language education in Thailand, it seems that English language teaching and learning in Thailand remains unsuccessful, and English proficiency of Thai students is still low (Khamkhien, 2010). According to Pawapatcharodom (2007), the most serious problem in English language learning is writing skills.

Writing is a complex process that requires the author to be aware of and combine various components of language successfully (Silva, 1993). According to Hedge (2005), there is a need to organize the development of ideas or information:

ambiguity in meaning must be avoided through accuracy; the writer must choose from complex grammatical devices for emphasis or focus; and finally, they must pay attention to the choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns and sentence structures to create a feasible meaning and an appropriate style to the subject matter and reader. Knowledge of grammar structures, idioms, vocabulary, including the effort to express ideas and the constant use of eyes, hands, and brain are required when writing (Sattayatham & Ratanapinyowong, 2008). Writing is not a spontaneous skill or acquired easily, in fact, it is viewed as 'probably the most difficult thing to do in language' (Nunan, 1999). In many ways, students learn to write in English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) differs from those who learn it as a native language (Williams 2005). Jenwitheesuk (2009) studied errors demonstrated in Thai college students' writing, and concluded that the causes that led to the errors in EFL learners' paragraphs were mainly from the interference of their first language. Lack of grammar and vocabulary was perceived to be the principal problems obstructing the effective writing of Thai learners (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2012). The lack of vocabulary resulted to lack of necessary contents in writing substantial paragraph. The students' English paragraph writing scores depended on how many grammar mistakes they had

have committed (Dhanarattigannon, 2008). Thai students, mainly blame the difficulty of English writing on their limited English proficiency. According to Thongrin (2002, cited in Dhanarattigannon, 2008), "Thai students, through teacher-direct instruction, have often "repeated the same kinds of writing problems, such as idea generations and linguistic difficulties". The skill they really need is a new approach to help them overcome their frustration and motivate them to get more ideas and thoughts. Using the pre-writing techniques and pictures as the aid materials in the writing classroom, may meet this need, because according to Bell (2007), "image is important for the ensuing steps, in which the students are required to create mental representation for increasingly more language, such as sentences and paragraphs".

The phenomenon mentioned is occurring at a private university in Nakhon Pathom Province. There was an initial analysis of the English descriptive paragraph writing of the students at a private university in Nakhon Pathom Province in 2013. The students were asked to write a paragraph with 9-12 sentences about their family, a place and a memorable vacation. All of them chose to completely follow the model paragraph from the teacher except the name and age of their parents, which was apparently a substitution technique.

With the foregoing situations, the researcher believe that it is important to secure sufficient data about using pre-writing techniques using images in teaching descriptive paragraph writing. Of particular interest to the researcher were the international nursing students at a private university in Thailand for the Academic Year 2013.

### **Research Objectives**

This research aimed to prove the effects of pre-writing techniques on English descriptive paragraph writing. Particularly, the research intended:

1. To use the pre-writing techniques using images in improving the English descriptive paragraph writing of students at a private university in Nakhon Pathom province.
2. To analyze the students' perspective towards using pre-writing techniques using images in writing English descriptive paragraphs.

### **Research Instruments**

The study was conducted at a private university in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. There was a total of 16 students who participated in the study.

The following instruments were used to gather data needed in the study: Pre-test and Post Test using pre-writing techniques with images and set of questionnaires that consists of three parts. The first part aimed to identify the general information of the sample students.

The second part aimed to clarify the perspectives of students toward using pre-writing techniques in writing English descriptive paragraph. There were 16 items included in the second part. These instruments were used to analyze the students perspectives on using the pre-writing techniques with images in writing English descriptive paragraphs. The details of the instruments are the following:

#### **Intervention Program**

The intervention program was conducted for five weeks for three hours each session. There were 15 hours for intervention class and two and a half hours each was spent for pre-test and post-test (including questionnaire distribution). The intervention began on the seventh week for five consecutive weeks, once a week, three hours per day. Five pre-writing techniques were used in the study and each writing techniques was introduced each week. The teacher also used images in writing descriptive paragraph to generate students' ideas.

#### **Pre-test and Post-test**

A pre-test was given to the sample students on Week 5 (30 June, 2014), in summer academic year 2013. The pre-test asked the students to write a 100-word descriptive paragraph about a place (restaurant) using a colored image. In choosing the image, the

researcher considered the clarity, and comprehensibility for the students. Before the students begin writing, they are asked to use the different pre-writing techniques that were taught each week. The result of pre-test identified the problems and English writing proficiency of the sample students. Then, on the seventh week, the intervention procedure was given to the sample students until the eleventh week. Students were not allowed to use dictionaries, textbooks and any other references both in the pre-test and post-test.

The post-test was given to the students on week 12 (August 11, 2014). The post-test also asked the students to write a 100-word descriptive paragraph about a place with the aid of a colored image. The result of the post-test measured the effects of the intervention program and proved the hypothesis of this research. Both the pre-test and post-test were scored by two English experts using the descriptive writing rubric which was adopted from iRubric ([www.rcampus.com](http://www.rcampus.com)).

The post-test was given to the students on week 12 (August 11, 2014). The post- test also asked the students to write a 100-word descriptive paragraph about a place with the aid of a colored picture. The result of the post-test measured the effects of the intervention program and proved the hypothesis of this research. Both the pre-test and

post-test were scored by two English experts using the descriptive writing rubric which was adopted from iRubric.

### Questionnaire

The researcher designed a questionnaire that was accomplished after the intervention program. The questionnaire has three parts. The first part aimed to identify the general information of the sample students. The second part aimed to clarify the perspectives of students which include interest in the use of the techniques and its usefulness or value of the pre-writing techniques in writing English descriptive paragraph. There were 16 items included

in the second part. The sample students evaluated each item using the Likert Scale (www.wikipedia) of 5 to 1 from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The third part was to find out the opinions of the students about pre-writing techniques. There were two items in the third part. One was to identify the perspectives of the students after using pre-writing techniques and the other item was to gather the suggestions and advices from the sample students after using pre-writing techniques with images in the writing class. In order to make sure the students can understand the questionnaire thoroughly, one Thai instructor explained the items to the students in their first language in advance.

### Results:

**Table 1: Results of the Comparisons of Pre-test and Post-test of the Participants in using the Pre-writing Techniques with Images**

| Overall   | $\bar{x}$ | S.D. | <i>t</i> -value | <i>p</i> -value |
|-----------|-----------|------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Pre-test  | 1.64      | 0.50 | -4.48**         | .000            |
| Post-test | 2.15      | 0.34 |                 | .000            |

\*\* $p \leq .01$

As shown in table 1, the effects of intervention to the samples was significant at \*\* $p \leq .01$  level. This means that using pre-writing techniques with images could improve the English

descriptive paragraph writing skill of students at a private university in Nakhon Pathom Province. Hence, the first research hypothesis was proven and accepted.

### Perspectives and Suggestions of Participants toward the Pre-writing Techniques

To gather the perspectives of the students toward pre-writing techniques

provided in English writing class of the sample students at a private university, part two of the questionnaire was interpreted as shown in the table below.

**Table 2: Perspectives Toward Pre-Writing Techniques Provided in the Writing Class**

| Items                                                                              | $\bar{x}$ | S.D. | Interpretation |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------|----------------|
| 1. Pre-writing techniques help students generate more ideas for writing paragraph  | 4.5       | 0.51 | Excellent      |
| 2. Pre-writing techniques had helped students improved paragraph writing abilities | 4.5       | 0.65 | Excellent      |

As presented in Table 2, results of the analysis reveal that using pre-writing techniques with images had helped them generate more ideas for writing ( $\bar{x}=4.5$ ). Most of the participants agreed that pre-writing techniques helped them improve their paragraph writing ability ( $\bar{x}=4.5$ ).

In order to document the perspectives of the sample students in using the pre-writing techniques in the writing class, the third part of questionnaire collected the suggestions and comments from them.

From the data collected, the students' perspectives in using the pre-writing techniques with images are listed below:

1. Helped them write more words and construct sentences;

2. Gave them better understanding in paragraph writing;  
3. Helped them developed their writing skill by organizing their ideas;  
4. Improved their vocabulary; and  
5. Gave them confidence in writing.

The questionnaire also showed the suggestions from the participants about the intervention program as listed below:

1. More examples should be given by the teacher for them to master the technique;  
2. Every writing class should be preceded with a pre-writing technique to help them generate more ideas.  
3. More writing exercises should be provided for the students to practice their writing skill.

**Discussion:**

The current study sought to determine if using pre-writing techniques with images could effectively improve the English descriptive paragraph writing of students at a private university in Nakhon Pathom. It further analyzed the students' perspectives toward using pre-writing techniques with images in improving English descriptive paragraph writing using images.

The results of the research revealed that students considered pre-writing techniques could help them generate and organize more ideas ( $\bar{x}=4.5$ ) which is in consistent with the findings of Dujsik (2008) in his study on the effects of pre-writing techniques training guided by computer-based procedural facilitation on ESL students' strategy use, writing quantity and writing quality in USA. His research in second language writing suggests that specific writing strategies related to writing purposes, audience, brainstorming, and organizing ideas are teachable and have a potential to improve the quantity and quality of writing produced by English as second language (ESL) learners. Moreover, the findings suggest the complex interplay among the factors influencing student writing development include writing strategy use, writing processes, writing tasks, task conditions, their past writing experience, and their language proficiency.

Majority of the students ( $\bar{x}=4.5$ ) considered the pre-writing techniques using images had helped them improve the writing abilities which agrees with the result of the study of Mahnam & Nejadansari (2012) on the effects of different pre-writing techniques on Iranian EFL writing achievement. There were twenty-three adult EFL students from Jihad-e-Daneshgahi English center in Iran who participated in this study. The findings revealed that students wrote better compositions as results of applying pre-writing strategies. This result also agrees with Tabatabaei & Ali (2012) in the research "The effects of reading-based pre-writing activities on the writing performance in an EFL setting". A total of 120 EFL pre and post-intermediate learners from one of the English Institutes of Isfahan participated in this study. The findings showed that pre-writing activities significantly improved the writing performance of both pre and post-intermediate EFL learners.

The findings of this research indicated that students could write faster and better by using pre-writing techniques ( $\bar{x}=4.21$ ) was in agreement with the study of Moghaddas (2011) in the effects of pre-writing techniques on the Indian learners' composition. The result of the study showed that with pre-writing techniques, the ESL students in Indian could be better writers. Moreover, the

research of Graham & Perin (2007) on effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools has shown that engaging students in pre-writing techniques had helped them improve the overall quality of their writing.

Liu (2006) did a study on pre-writing techniques in Langfang Teachers College in China which showed that the pre-writing techniques had helped the students stimulate their thoughts and make writing easier, helped students write in a more motivating and stimulating way; and, helped the students create a cooperative and enjoyable atmosphere in the writing classroom which corresponds with the findings in this research ( $\bar{x}=4.21$ ).

In this research, the participants felt more confident in English writing by using pre-writing techniques with images ( $\bar{x}=4$ ). This result is in congruence with the findings of Joyce (2009), in her research, using Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) in which students can learn to organize their thoughts and create detailed responses to prompts and questions. The results demonstrated that the use of SRSD helped to improve student responses, and in turn, their confidence in their writing. Moreover, Ho (2006) did a study on using the process approach to teach writing in six Hongkong primary classrooms, with six primary school teachers and students. The results testified that the writing program was successful on the whole as it helped to

bring about positive changes in most students' attitudes towards writing and their writing habits. The writing program also heightened the writing ability and confidence of students.

In addition, O' Mealia (2011) completed a study on how can prewriting strategies benefit students in the home of 10-year-old twin brothers as they were introduced to three types of prewriting strategies: brainstorming, graphical representation, and plan, organize, write. The results showed that the pre-writing techniques improved students' writing in terms of content, organization, voice and also improved students' motivation and creativity towards English writing.

#### Conclusion:

The findings of the research showed that the intervention program was effective in improving the English descriptive paragraph writing abilities of the participants. Moreover, the participants felt more confident in English paragraph writing by using pre-writing techniques. There was a significant difference at 0.01 level between the pre-test and post-test of the participants. The results of the post-test of the participants were higher than the pre-test. The findings also indicated that the participants were very satisfied with the intervention program ( $\bar{x}=4.5$ ).

In conclusion, the findings of the study accepted the hypotheses of this

วารสารมหาวิทยาลัยคริสเตียน

ปีที่ ๒๒ ฉบับที่ ๔ (ตุลาคม - ธันวาคม) ๒๕๕๙

research that using pre-writing techniques could improve the students English descriptive paragraph writing and pre-writing techniques using images. These techniques helped the students to write more words and construct sentences, gave them better understanding in paragraph writing, helped them developed their writing skill by organizing their ideas, improved their vocabulary, and gave them confidence in writing English descriptive paragraph.

It is therefore suggested that educators and administrators could adopt using the different writing techniques in designing their writing lessons and English curriculum to address the writing problems of the students.

---

### References

- Bell, N. (2007). *Visualizing and verbalizing for language comprehension and thinking* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Luis Obispo, CA: Gander Publishing.
- Descriptive paragraph iRubric. (2013). [Online]. Retrieved June 1, 2013 from [www.rcampus.com/indexrubric.cfm](http://www.rcampus.com/indexrubric.cfm).
- Dhanarattigannon, J. (2008). *Thai college students' response to nontraditional writing instruction in a Thai university*. [Online]. Retrieved June 1, 2013 from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT 3381449).
- Dujsik, D. (2008). *The effects of pre-writing strategy training guided by computer-based procedural facilitation on ESL students' strategy use, writing quantity, and writing quality*. [Online]. Retrieved June 13, 2014 from (Graduate Thesis and Dissertations). University of South Florida. Retrieved from <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/221>.
- Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing next : Effective strategies to improve writing of adoles cents in middle and high schools - A report to carnegie corporation of new york*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- Hedge, T. (2005). *Writing*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Ho, B. (2006). Using the process approach to teach writing in 6 Hongkong primary classrooms. *New Hovizons in Education*. No. 53. [Online]. Retrieved June 23, 2014 from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ847597.pdf>.
- James, B. (2015, January). *Thai English proficiency drops, now. 3<sup>rd</sup> in Asia*. [Online]. Retrieved June 23, 2014 from Bangkok Post website, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/learning-news/756536/thai-english-proficiency-drops-now-3rd-worst-in-asia-ef>.

- Jenwitheesuk, T. (2009). *A study of persisted syntactic errors in writing of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of English for international communication program*. Paper presented at the The Role of Universities in Hands-on Education.
- Joyce, M. F. (2009). Effects of pre-writing activities on the writing confidence in children with disabilities. *The Leading Digital Library Dedicated to Education & Information Technology*. Retrieved June 23, 2014 from <http://www.editlib.org/p/124850/>.
- Khamkhien, A. (2010). "Teaching English speaking and English speaking tests in the Thai context: A Reflection from Thai Perspective". *English Language Teaching*. 3(1) : 184-190.
- Kita, S. Kathleen. (1996). Testing Communicative Competence. *The Internet TESL Journal*. II (5) Retrieved June 23, 2014 from. <http://iteslj.org/>.
- Kitao (1996). *Why do we teach English?*. *The Internet TESL J.*, 2(4) : 1-3. Retrieved June 23, 2014 from <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/>.
- Likert Scale. (2016). [Online]. Retrieved September 1, 2016 14 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>.
- Mahnam, L. & Nejadansari, D. (2012). "The effects of different pre-writing strategies on Iranian EFL writing achievement". *International Education Studies*. 5 (1.) [Online]. Retrieved May 1, 2014 from <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ies/article/view/14300>.
- Moghaddas, B. (2011). "The effect of pre-writing activities on the Indian ESL learners' Composition". *ELT Voices, India*. ISSN: 2230-9136.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching & Learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Hedge, T. (2005). *Writing*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- O' Mealia, S. (2011). How can prewriting strategies benefit students? *Education Masters*. Fisher Digital Publications.
- Pawapatcharandom, R. (2007). *An investigation of Thai Students' English Language Problems and Their Learning Strategies in the International Program at Mahidol University*. M.A. Thesis: King Mongkut's Institute of Technology North Bangkok.
- Sattayatham, A. & Rattanapinyowong, P. (2008). "Analysis of errors in paragraph writing in English by first year medical students from the four medical schools at Mahidol University". *Silpakorn University International Journal*. (8) : 17-38.
- Silva, T. (1993). "Toward and Understanding of the Distinct Nature of L2 Writing". *TESOL Quarterly*. 27(4): 657-677.

- Tabatabaei, O. & Ali, H. A. (2012). "The effect of reading-based pre-writing activities on the writing performance in an EFL setting". *Journal of Educational and Social Research*. Doi:10.5901/jesr.2012. V2n2. 371.
- Thailand ranks near bottom in English proficiency: survey*. [Online]. Retrieved September 10, 2016, from The Nation website, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/news/business/macroeconomics/30218895>.
- Watcharapunyawong, S. & Usaha, S. (2013). "Thai EFL students' writing errors in different text types: the interference of the first language". *English Language Teaching*. 6(1) : 67-78.
- Williams, J. (2005). *Teaching writing in second or foreign language classrooms*. USA : McGraw Hill.

