



## Enhancing CMU Second Year Students' English Writing Ability, Self-Confidence, and Motivation for Learning by Implementing Web Board Writing Activities

ผลของการใช้กิจกรรมการเขียนบนเว็บบอร์ดเพื่อส่งเสริมความสามารถ  
ในการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ ความเชื่อมั่นในตนเองและแรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ  
ของนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 2 มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

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### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์คือ 1) ศึกษาความสามารถในการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาก่อนและหลังการเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมการเขียนผ่านเว็บบอร์ด 2) ศึกษาความเชื่อมั่นในตนเองของนักศึกษาก่อนและหลังการเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมการเขียนผ่านเว็บบอร์ด และ 3) ศึกษาแรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาก่อนและหลังการเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมการเขียนผ่านเว็บบอร์ด โดยประชากรที่ใช้ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้คือนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 2 มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่จังหวัดเชียงใหม่ที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนกระบวนวิชา 001201 Critical Reading and Effective Writing ผู้วิจัยได้ทำการสุ่มตัวอย่างโดยใช้หลักการการสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจงและการสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบพิจารณาตามความสะดวกร่วมกัน ดังนั้น กลุ่มตัวอย่าง คือ นักศึกษาที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนในตอน (Section) ที่ผู้วิจัยเป็นผู้สอน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ได้แก่ แบบวัดความสามารถในการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ แบบวัดความเชื่อมั่นในตนเอง และแบบวัดแรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ สำหรับการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยสถิตินั้น ทำโดยการหาค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และ t-test หลังจากนักศึกษาได้เข้าร่วมกิจกรรมการเขียนผ่านเว็บบอร์ดเป็นเวลา 6 สัปดาห์ พบว่า

1. ค่าเฉลี่ยจากคะแนนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาก่อนเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมการเขียนผ่านเว็บบอร์ดสูงขึ้น (Mean = 13.85) กว่าค่าเฉลี่ยก่อนเข้าร่วมกิจกรรม (Mean = 10.90)
2. หลังเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมการเขียนผ่านเว็บบอร์ดค่าเฉลี่ยของความเชื่อมั่นในตนเองของนักศึกษาสูงขึ้น (Mean = 1.71) กว่าค่าเฉลี่ยก่อนเข้าร่วมกิจกรรม (Mean = 2.13)

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3. ค่าเฉลี่ยแรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาหลังเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมสูงขึ้น (Mean = 1.65) กว่าค่าเฉลี่ยก่อนเข้าร่วมกิจกรรม (Mean = 2.16)

## คำสำคัญ

เทคโนโลยีเพื่อการศึกษา เว็บบอร์ด การสอนเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ

## Abstract

The purposes of this study were 1) to examine English writing ability of the students before and after the implementation of web board writing activities 2) to study the students' self-confidence before and after implementing the web board writing activities and 3) to study the motivation for learning English of the students before and after the web board writing activity implementation. The population of the study was second year students of Chiang Mai University who were studying the Fundamental English course (001201: Critical Reading and Effective Writing). The combination of purposive sampling and convenience sampling was applied in the research. Therefore, the subjects were students in the section taught by the researcher. The experimental instruments consisted of four web board activities, an English writing ability test, a self-confidence test and a motivation test. The tests were administered both before and after the experiment. The data obtained were analyzed by using mean, standard deviation and t-test.

After implementing web board activities for six weeks, the results were as follows:

1. The mean score of students' writing test improved from 10.90 on the pretest to 13.85 on the posttest.
2. The students' self-confidence mean score rose from an average score of 1.71 to 2.13.
3. The students' motivation for learning English mean score was higher, increasing from 1.65 to 2.16.

## Keywords

Online Educational Technology, Web Board, English Writing Teaching

## Introduction

Writing skill is very important for language learners, especially in the globalized world where communication across languages and cultures can be facilitated by advanced technology (Weigle, 2014). Writing, compared to reading, speaking and listening, is viewed as the most difficult and



challenging skill (Gangula & Eliah, 2015, 51; Kitchakarn, 2014, 35). To complete writing tasks, learners struggle organizing and generating their ideas and expressing them with understandable written target language. At the same time, they find difficulties in spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, and grammar (Richards & Renandya, 2002 cited in Khoii, 2011, 493).

To make writing more appealing among learners, the learning environment should allow learners to write with minimized anxiety, value all writing assignments equally, give learners a sense of success, and promote learners' self-confidence. Moreover, writing tasks should focus more on content than grammar and mechanics (Cheng, 2002, 652-653). Theoretically, teaching learners to write should be done by preparing them to use the language in varied contexts. Moreover, writing activities must support learners in thinking critically, searching for information and communicating with others (Boonma, 1999, 2).

Affective domain plays an important role in language learning. Self-confidence and learning motivation are considered as the most influential factors in acquiring a language (Al-Hebaish, 2012, 60 ; Soureshjani & Naseri, 2001). For that reason, the learning activities in a writing class should provide learners with chances to express their opinion and write based on their personal experience in order to encourage them to have interaction through their writing. Such learning activities will enhance learners' self-confidence and learning motivation and increase learners' experience in using the target language in so-called real communication.

Nevertheless, in practice, the current writing teaching environment in Thailand does not quite facilitate learners' writing ability because of many factors including the large class sizes, lack of classroom interaction and ineffective teaching approaches. Such a learning environment causes learners to have anxiety when they write, which affects self-confidence or self-perception of competence (Cheng, 2002, 652).

Online technology could help solve some of the difficulties learners encounter in their writing class owing to its features which support language learning. One of the online tools which can be used in the writing class is the web board. It is the online technology in which its users can share information and respond to others in various forms, such as text, photos, and video. Furthermore, the information on a web board can be accessible anywhere and at anytime (Siegel, Ward, & McCoach, 2001, 4). Because of its features, the web board has been used for educational purposes, however, only the use of the web board in a writing class is discussed in this paper.

The web board is beneficial to learners in many aspects: skill building, participation, and affective domain. Initially, the web board allows its users (learners and teacher) to interact with one

another by sharing information and expressing their opinions. In such interactions, learners have the opportunity to review their feelings and accept others' opinions (Cheung, 2008, 27). In addition, when participating in web board activities, posts from peers and teacher's feedback are considered resources for learners. They can observe posts of others and compare their own comments with the classmates'. They can learn from teacher's comments, as well. (Muangsamai, 2005, 523-526). Consequently, the web board has been an effective tool for building the knowledge and promoting critical thinking and writing skills of the learners while they participate in web board activities.

Due to the interactive communication feature of online discussion, learners are more engaged in web board activities when compared to the traditional classroom setting. Firstly, each student is able to respond to threads and comments meanwhile in classroom face-to-face communication, not many learners can participate simultaneously in class discussion (Wilson & Fairchild, 2010, 46). Additionally, an asynchronous format like a web board discussion can enable learners to have freedom in managing their own learning because they can participate in the online activity whenever it is convenient for them (Arbaugh, 2000, 214).

The web board provides a more encouraging learning environment for students (Rollag, 2010, 502). Despite learners' varied characteristics and learning style, they are able to participate in an online activity. Additionally, learners do not have to wait to get attention or permission from the teacher when they would like to say something. In the same vein, shy students need not to feel like they are competing with other students when they want to join the class discussion. Students with low proficiency of English can also take as much time as necessary for participation when participating in an online discussion, therefore, web board activities can lead to equal participation among students (Arbaugh, 2000, 215). As a result, learners' motivation and confidence can be enhanced by the features of an online discussion on a web board.

In conclusion, the use of the web board in English class is advantageous to learners. The suitable learning environment created by a web board facilitates the accessibility to a learning activity. Web board activities promote interaction among its users, including both the learners and the instructor, which increases participation and writing and critical thinking skills, as well. The affective domain, such as self-confidence and learning motivation of the learners, can also be enhanced with the use of a web board in a learning activity.

Despite the benefits of web boards used for language learning, there is not much empirical evidence from research supporting its advantages on a learner's writing skill. To the best of our knowledge, most research used a web board as a tool for promoting knowledge building or other



skills instead of English language skills because those research studied the learners who used English as a first or second language.

Nonetheless, there are some studies in which a web board has been used as one of the research tools to investigate English language learning in Thailand. To illustrate, a web board and chat room were used as the means of communication to study class participation, interaction and the learners' skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking (Chanrunghanok & Gebhard, 2004). Another study was conducted to investigate the effects on learning with Web Collaborative Tool (WCT) in Web-based Instruction (WBI) upon Metacognition and English writing competency of Thai and Chinese students. Yet again, a web board was used as one of the tools along with Email and online chat, in the research (Dejthongpong, 2002).

One can assume that the study of the web board as a solution to university students' difficulties in English writing is hardly found. Consequently, the researcher conducted a research implementing a web board as the only tool to solve the limitations of a college writing class to promote students' writing ability, self-confidence and learning motivation.

### Objectives of the Study

1. Compare the writing ability of the learners before and after implementing web board writing activities
2. Compare the learners' self-confidence before and after the implementation of web board writing activities
3. Compare the learning motivation of the learners before and after the implementation of web board writing activities

### Research Question

How writing activities on the web board enhance learners' writing ability, self-confidence and learning motivation?

### Research Methodology

#### 1. Participants

The research was conducted using the one group pretest posttest design. Also, the sampling was done by the application of both purposive sampling and convenience sampling methods. The participants; therefore, were 26 undergraduate students at Chiang Mai University

who were studying the third English fundamental course: Critical Reading and Effective writing (see Appendix) in the section taught by the researcher. This section was chosen out of the three sections responsible by the researcher because the students were studying in a variety of academic fields including science and technology ( $n = 8$ ); humanities ( $n = 6$ ); and health science ( $n = 12$ ). This course aimed to enable students to develop reading skills, critical thinking skills and skills in writing different genres of texts ranging from cartoons, jokes, and advertisements to news reports. The students met for two 75-minute period per week for 15 weeks.

## 2. Instruments

Based on the objectives of the study, the quantitative and qualitative methods were employed for data collection. The instruments used in this research were categorized into two types: experimental instruments and data collection instruments.

### 3. Experimental instruments:

3.1 Class web board: The web board was created by the researcher on the [www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com).

3.2 Video clips: The four video clips related to controversial issues, such as bullying and a campaign for sexual diversity, were selected from various websites and posted on the class web board by the researcher in order to engage learners into the discussion on the web board.

### 4. Data collection instruments

4.1 The writing ability pretest and posttest: Different tests were used to test learners writing ability in order to prevent learners from remembering the answers to the previous test. Each test asked the learners to write a paragraph responding to the text.

4.2 Likert scale questionnaires for measuring the learners' level of self-confidence and level of learning motivation: The self-confidence questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on the theory of self-confidence, while the learning motivation questionnaire was adapted and developed based on the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery International AMTB Research Project and the motivation questionnaire used in the research studying the university students' motivation toward English language learning in Thailand (see Kitjaroonchai & Kitjaroonchai, 2012).

4.3 Interview questions: There were six interview questions (see Appendix) created by the researcher to explore the learners' attitudes toward the web board writing activity.

4.4 Writing ability rubric: The rubric, as the tool for grading the learners' paragraphs, was developed by the researcher. The learners' paragraphs were graded on its content, main idea, organization and transition, and grammar and mechanics.



All the instruments above were inspected in terms of content validity and construct validity by three experts. After the inspection, they were revised based on the experts' comments and suggestions. Before being used in the research, they were piloted with a group of learners to check its validity and reliability. The instruments were revised again based on the feedback of this group of learners.

## Procedure

On the first day of class, the participants took the writing test (pretest), and completed the questionnaires for their level of self-confidence and learning motivation. In the second period, they attended a hands-on training on the use of the class web board on [www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com) held by the researcher. After that, the learners watched one video clip per week and wrote their opinion towards the issue presented in the clip on the web board. During those four weeks, the researcher responded to each learner's writing by giving them some feedback on the content of their writing instead of correcting their mistakes. However, the correction of grammatical errors was done implicitly because the explicit correction might discourage the students from participating the writing activities on the web board. After four weeks, they took the writing test and did the questionnaires again. Both writing pretest and posttest were graded by three graders. A week after, the researcher spent five days to interview all learners about their attitudes towards the web board activity. Finally, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. Mean, standard Deviation and t-test were used in analyzing the score from writing test and questionnaires. The data from the interview were transcribed focusing on their content.

## Results

In order to answer the research question, the data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. The following table shows the comparison between the mean scores from the writing test and the questionnaires before and after the webboard writing activity implementation (Table 1).



Table 1

The comparison between the mean scores of the writing test and the questionnaires before and after the webboard writing activity implementation

Scores	Pretest (Mean±SD)	Posttest (Mean±SD)
Writing test score	10.90±2.30	13.85±2.44
Self-confidence score	1.71±0.53	2.13±0.21
Learning motivation score	1.65±0.30	2.19±0.25

As shown in table 1, the learners obtained higher scores on their writing posttest as compared to their pretest, by the mean score improving from 10.90 on the pretest to 13.85 on the posttest. The learners' self-confidence was also higher, increasing from 1.71 to 2.13 after the web board writing activity implementation. Eventually, the students' motivation for learning English rose from an average score of 1.65 to 2.19.

To check the differences between the means of the pretest and posttest scores, the t-test was used in this study (Table 2).

Table 2

The differences between the means of the pretest and posttest scores

95% Confidence Interval of the Difference								
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	P-Value
Pre_Writing - Post_Writing	-2.94231	2.57809	.50560	-3.98362	-1.90100	-5.8199	10	.000
Pre_Confidence- Post_Confidence	-.41600	.57757	.14913	-.73585	-.09615	-2.790	14	.014
Pre_Motivation - Post_Motivation	-.53636	.18173	.05479	-.65845	-.41428	-9.789	10	.000

As shown in Table 2, the learners' writing ability, self-confidence and learning motivation were increased after the implementation of the web board writing activities.





## Discussion

The results of the research revealed that after participating in the web board activity, learners' writing ability, self-confidence and learning motivation were all enhanced. Therefore, this section sheds the lights on the reasons contributing to the increase of students' writing ability, self-confidence and learning motivation.

There are two main possible explanations for the increase of the learners' writing ability. To begin with, the web board was interesting, meaningful and interactive. Learners can write effectively when the topic of writing is interesting and relatable to themselves. What is more, a writing activity should give learners an opportunity to think, as it is said "thinking and writing go together" (Gangula & Eliah, 2015). To clarify, during the interview, the learners mentioned that the video clips posted on the web board were interesting for them. Thus, the learners were encouraged to think critically and express their own opinion in the comments on the web board. Also, the opinion-sharing activity and feedback from friends and the teacher (researcher) made the web board activity interactive and meaningful. This can be comparable to the research findings of Zarei, Hussin & Rudravarpu (2015) suggesting that language learning and acquisition processes could be enhanced through meaningful interaction occurring in asynchronous online discussion. In this research, when the learners posted their opinions towards the video clips or wrote their comments responding to other posts, they seemed to use the language in a so-called meaningful and interactive context. Secondly, the writing of other learners and the teacher's feedback served as resource for the learners when they participated in the writing activity on the web board. Learners' opinions indicated that their friends' writing and teacher's feedback helped them when they wrote due to the fact that they could use others' writing and feedback as examples and guidelines as followed.

*I get some more knowledge from your (researcher's) answer.*

*I just realize that "Hurt" is both the past and present tense form of the word". And I've already edited my answer by changing "hurted" to hurt. Thanks a lot.*

*The comment of participant no. 9*

In regards to the increased self-confidence and learning motivation after the implementation of web board writing activities, Dörnyei's view (2001) could be used to explain such improvement. He indicates that an effective learning environment should be supportive and safe for the learners. In this environment, learners will not be afraid of being embarrassed or criticized for making a

mistake while participating in the class activities using the target language because they know that “mistakes are a natural part of learning”. (Dörnyei, 2001, 41) The participants answer in the interview showed that they agree with Dörnyei as follows.

*“The teacher’s complement in her reply encourages me to write more.”*

*Interview with the participant no.6*

*“Writing on the web board does not humiliate me. I feel embarrassed when I make mistakes when writing on paper and being checked by teacher, which makes me dare not to write much. But, writing on the web board give me courage to write more. Even though, there are grammatical mistakes, I am comfortable to share my opinion.”*

*Interview with the participant no.18*

## Conclusion

The web board has proved to be an effective tool for writing classes because its features can help facilitate an appropriate learning environment, encourage class interaction, and promote the learners’ affective domain. For classroom application, web board activities can be integrated into lessons in the classroom due to their ability to enhance learners’ engagement. However, instructors must have a well-prepared lesson plan in order to ensure that the web board will be beneficial to their learners/students.

Further research on web board activities can be conducted with different demographics of students in order to study other variables, such as reading skill or the attitudes of learners towards web board activities.

## Limitations

Although the objectives of the research have been accomplished, there is an unavoidable limitation. The research experiment was completed in six weeks. During that time, the participants studied the first three units: Introduction to Critical Reading, Introduction to Critical Thinking and Styles of Writing. The first two units focused on the critical thinking and reading skills, while unit three was about summary writing. The lesson on summary writing in this unit taught the learners to grab the important ideas from the original text to be used in their summary. This could imply that



the knowledge gained from the first three units might not be very applicable to the pretest and posttest of the research. However, it is not possible to conclude that the improvement of learners' writing ability is caused by the web board activity alone due to the limitations of the one group pretest and posttest design used in this study. It is probable that learners improved their writing skill with the knowledge learnt in class or by other means, such as self-studying. Accordingly, there should be a comparison between control and experiment groups to confirm the advantages of web board implementation in language learning.

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## Appendix

### 1. Course Description of the third English Fundamental (Critical Reading and Effective Writing)

ENGL 201 (001201) Critical Reading and Effective Writing 3(3-0-6)

English language skills for critical reading from different sources and media and effective writing on topics of students' interests



## 2. Interview questions

2.1 Do you prefer doing writing activity in the classroom or writing activity on the web board? Why?

2.2 Is doing web board writing activity easier than doing writing activity in the classroom? Why or why not?

2.3 Do you think comments on the web board are useful for you? If yes, how and why are they useful?

2.4 Does the writing activity on the web board help increase your self-confidence? If yes, how does it help?

2.5 Does the writing activity on the web board help you improve your writing skill? If yes, how does it help?

2.6 Would you like the web board writing activity to be integrated in your course? If yes, how should it be done?