



ผลของการใช้กิจกรรมการเขียนเชิงสร้างสรรค์ออนไลน์ที่มีต่อความสามารถใน  
การเขียนเชิงสร้างสรรค์ของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 1

Effects of Online Creative Writing Instruction on Mathayom 1  
Students' Creative Writing Ability

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บทคัดย่อ

การเขียนเป็นทักษะที่ยากและการที่จะให้นักเรียนเขียนนั้นก็เป็นเรื่องที่ยากเช่นกัน ดังนั้น การวิจัยในครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนของนักเรียนและสร้างแรงจูงใจที่ดีในการเขียน โดยบูรณาการทักษะการเขียนเชิงสร้างสรรค์และการเรียนออนไลน์เข้าสู่การเรียนการสอนเขียน กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้แก่ นักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 1 จำนวน 38 คน กำลังศึกษาการเขียนขั้นพื้นฐาน ในภาคเรียนที่ 2 ปีการศึกษา 2558 ผู้วิจัยใช้วิธีสุ่มแบ่งกลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นสองกลุ่ม ได้แก่ กลุ่มเรียนออนไลน์ และกลุ่มเรียนในชั้นเรียน นักเรียนทั้งสองกลุ่มทำแบบทดสอบก่อนเรียนและหลังเรียน ในระยะทดลอง 12 สัปดาห์นั้น นักเรียนกลุ่มออนไลน์ศึกษาบทเรียนด้วยตนเองผ่านระบบออนไลน์ ในขณะที่กลุ่มเรียนในชั้นเรียนได้รับบทเรียนการเขียนเชิงสร้างสรรค์ในห้อง เมื่อสิ้นสุดการทดลอง ผู้วิจัยศึกษาแรงจูงใจในการเรียนและการเขียนของนักเรียนโดยใช้แบบสอบถามแรงจูงใจ ผลการทดลองพบว่า ความสามารถทางการเขียนของนักเรียนทั้งสองกลุ่มได้เพิ่มขึ้น หลังจากการทดลอง แต่เมื่อเปรียบเทียบคะแนนเฉลี่ยหลังเรียน ผลปรากฏว่า นักเรียนกลุ่มเรียนในชั้นเรียนมีผลการเรียนสูงกว่ากลุ่มออนไลน์อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ผลการทดลองยังชี้ให้เห็นว่า การเรียนออนไลน์สามารถสร้างแรงจูงใจได้มากกว่าการเรียนในชั้นเรียน ผลการทดลองชี้ไปสู่การเรียนแบบผสมผสานในห้องเรียนการสอนการเขียนเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนของนักเรียน อย่างไรก็ตาม ผู้วิจัยได้ศึกษาและอธิบายถึงปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อผลการทดลอง

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## Abstract

Writing is a difficult skill and getting students to write can be also difficult. Therefore, this study intended to improve students' writing ability and create positive writing motivation by integrating online instruction and creative writing skills into a writing course. 38 mathayom 1 students, who were taking basic writing in the second semester academic year 2014 at a provincial high school in Thailand, were randomly divided into two groups: online group and face-to-face group (FTF). Both groups were required to take a creative writing pre-test and a creative writing post-test. During the 12-week experiment, the online group worked independently online, while the FTF group received the treatment in a classroom setting. After the experiment, students' learning and writing motivation were investigated. The results revealed that students' creative writing ability in both groups was improved due to the experiment. When the online group post-test score was compared with the FTF group, there was a significant difference in the post-test score in favor of FTF instruction. However, it was found that online instruction can promote students' motivation more than FTF instruction. The results suggested that a blended creative writing course should be considered in order to improve students' writing ability. Furthermore, possible factors that could have affected the results were discussed.

**คำสำคัญ:** การเขียนเชิงสร้างสรรค์ / บทเรียนออนไลน์

**KEYWORDS:** CREATIVE WRITING / ONLINE INSTRUCTION

## Introduction

In today's world, people change the ways that they communicate (Colford, 1996). Colford pointed out that, in this innovative era, people write more in the form of 'electronic texts' and publish their writing on the Internet. Internet World Stats (2013) revealed a finding that English is the most used language in the Internet. If the Internet affects the way people communicate, then it affects English language teaching (Teeler & Gray, 2000; Boltan, 2010; Akinwanide, 2012). As such, teachers need to adjust their lessons coincide with this innovative world and serve the needs of students.

As mentioned above, the role of English writing becomes more important as a tool to communicate through technology. However, as previous studies have shown, the Thai students' English writing ability needs to be improved. A reason that may explain why Thai students have such a low ability in English writing is that writing is considered the most complex and difficult skill for language learners (Joshua, 2007). She explained that there are various factors that influence writing such as learners' attitudes toward writing, writing ability, interest in the topic, background knowledge, and experiences. Parichut (2014) studied writing anxiety among grade 11 Thai Students. The result indicated that could cause writing anxiety. Loss (2013) studied the challenges of tenth grade EFL students in Thailand. He found that students experienced problems with researching/plagiarism and maintaining internal focus, while largely attributing their difficulties to a lack of English language ability.

Brown (2001) suggested that elements of writing such as structure, organization, and rhetoric are important. However, focusing too much attention on them can block learners'

ideas. Fleming (1991) stated that there are many writing assignments that students are expected to do in class such as writing report or writing summaries of texts. These senses of expectation are traps for both teachers and students because most of writing assignments deny students the opportunity to use their creativity, block learners' fluency, and do not provide space for students to play with their ideas inside the assigned topic. In effect, students' writing pieces are controlled, predictable, generic, and unemotional.

Employing creative writing in the classroom can make students' work livelier and enhance students' writing ability (Grainger, Gooch, and Lambirth, 2005). Previous studies have indicated that creative writing benefits students. For example, Temizkan (2011) investigated the effects of creative writing activities on story writing skills. The results revealed that the story writing post-test score of the experimental group was significantly higher than in the control group. He discussed that creative writing activities are more effective than traditional writing education in improving students' story writing ability. He continued that creative writing activities also have a significant effect on content, setting, and time dimension of story structure.

Getting students to write can also be difficult for a teacher. Online instructions could be a good motivation and a helpful facilitator for students to write in English. Support for this line of argument was provided by previous studies. Duan (2011) examined the relationship between students' motivation and second language writing. In her study, she mentioned online writing labs as a source for authentic materials where learners can learn about grammar and writing, interact in an authentic English environment, develop their language proficiency through self-access sites, and improve their writing skills through corpus technology. In online writing, learners are encouraged to be autonomous learners. They play active roles as actors, creators, writers, discussants, and editors. Merchant (2003) conducted a study on the use of e-mail as a means of providing support for classroom writing. The research showed positive effects on students' writing ability. Furthermore, the digital communication used in this research provided a creative form of interactive written discourse on screen. Additionally, Kitchakarn (2012) compared students' summary writing ability before and after they were taught using an online blog. The results revealed that after the students worked together on weblogs, their English summary writing mean score of the posttest was higher than that of the pretest, and they had positive attitudes toward using weblogs in learning.

Thus, this study aimed to investigate the effects of using online creative writing ability on mathayom 1 students by answering the following questions:

1. Is students' creative writing post-test score after taking online creative writing instruction significantly higher than those who took face-to-face instruction?
2. What is the students' motivation towards each type of instruction?

## **Objectives**

1. To compare mathayom 1 students' creative writing ability after taking the online creative writing instruction and face-to-face instruction.
2. To compare mathayom 1 students' motivation after taking the online creative writing instruction and face-to-face instruction.

## **Research Design**

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were 38 mathayom 1 students who were studying at Kannasootsuksalai School in Suphan Buri province, Thailand. The participants were randomly divided into 2 groups: the experimental group and the control group.

### **Procedures**

This study was divided into 2 phases. The first phase, the online creative writing instruction and all instruments were developed. Steps in teaching creative writing (Carter, 2010); free writing, teacher modeling, class writing, sharing writing, opening, discussing, and concluding was integrated with the activities support by web 2.0 tools to create the online creative writing instruction. The second phase was the implementation of the online creative writing instruction and all instruments. The experiment was held in this phase for 12 weeks. Before the experiment, both experimental group and control group took a creative writing pretest. During the experiment, the experimental group worked independently with online creative writing instruction, while the control group received face-to-face creative writing in a classroom setting. After the experiment, both groups took a creative writing post-test and completed the motivation questionnaires.

### **Tests and scoring procedures**

In pre- and post-test, students were given writing prompts. They had 90 minutes to plan, write, and revise their stories. Two raters evaluated students' creative writing ability by following the criteria on the creative writing scoring rubric. There were six traits on the creative writing scoring rubric; characters, setting, organization of plot, creativity, sentence fluency, and convention. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to measure the suitable levels of inter-rater reliability.

Two creative writing motivation questionnaires were developed for online instruction and face-to-face instruction to measure students' motivation after the experiment. Both questionnaires were parallel. There were 14 items in each questionnaire to investigate students' motivation. Item 1 to 13 are rating scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Item 14 is a choosing item for instruction types for students' next writing course.

The data gained from this study were analyzed by mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), standard deviation (S.D.), a paired sample t-test, and an independent sample t-test.

## Results

### Pretest of the study

The pretest was to ensure the researcher that the experimental group and the control group had the same level of creative writing ability before the experiment. Both groups' mean scores were statically very close. Therefore, there was not a significant difference between the two groups at the .05 significance level.

### Research question 1

The first research question asked if students' post-test score after taking online creative writing instruction is significantly higher than those who took face-to-face instruction. The results revealed that the control group post-test mean score ( $\bar{x} = 16.21$ ) was significantly higher than the experimental group post-test mean score ( $\bar{x} = 14.63$ ) at the .05 significance level. In other words, the control group appeared to improve their skill higher than the experimental group due to the experiment. When analyzing the scoring traits, a significant difference was found in Grammar and Spelling trait.

### Research question 2

In regards to students' motivation towards each type of instruction, the results revealed that online creative writing instruction promoted students' writing motivation more than face-to-face writing instruction. The experimental group grand mean score was 4.18, while the control group grand mean score was 3.87.

In this study, online students were also more motivated than face-to-face students to take future online writing courses. Results showed that 100% of students who took the online creative writing instruction wanted to continue having this instruction for their next course, while only 21% of students who took face-to-face creative writing instruction wanted their next writing course to be online.

## Discussion

The results revealed that students in the face-to-face instruction seemed to have better performance on the post-test. Furthermore, when investigating students' motivation towards each type of instruction, the results showed that online instruction was able to motivate students for learning and writing English better than face-to-face instruction. This result confirms the findings of previous studies conducted by Duan (2011), Kitchakarn (2012), and Cummings (2004). Thus, the results of the present study do not support several

previous studies that showed a positive relationship between students' achievement and their motivation (Hashemian and Heidari, 2013; Brown, 2007; Bernaus and Gardner, 2008). Several factors could be considered as to why the findings of this study did not support most of the findings of the previous studies and related literature.

### **1. Limitation of pretest and post-test**

The pretest and post-test were set in a controlled environment. Both online and face-to-face instruction groups took the paper-based pretest and post-test before and after they received the treatment. Students were not allowed to use a dictionary or any writing support tools on the pre- and post-tests. During the experiment, students in the online instruction learned writing with support of the web 2.0 tools and word processor. They were able to use an online dictionary and spell check technology while the face-to-face group used a traditional dictionary or asked their friends to spell the words they needed.

### **2. The use of online instruction**

The comparison of post-test mean score of the two groups pointed out that there was a significant difference in grammar and spelling in favor of the face-to-face instruction. One reason could be because both groups had paper-based tests. Therefore, students in the online instruction did not have the writing support tools on their test. It could be assumed that word processing, somehow, could affect ESL students' cognitive skills. Pennington (1993) discussed that relying too much spellcheck could affect the nature of vocabulary learning.

### **3. Peer feedback**

At the last stage of each instruction, students had the opportunity to share their writing in order to give and receive feedback to and from their friends. In online instruction, after students published their work online, their work was shown in the online class library to allow classmates to read it. Students used web 2.0 tools as a platform to give comments. In face-to-face instruction, after students finished creating their story books, they displayed their work on tables in the classroom. Students mingled around the class to read their friends' works, gave comments.

There were interactions between readers and writers in face-to-face instruction. For example, the reader asked for clarification of some parts of the story that they didn't understand. Once the readers commented, the writers asked for in-depth explanations on how they could improve their work. Writers and readers came to agreements on how to improve the story. This was unlike the online instruction where the

readers posted their comments but there were not any replies or questions on the feedback. Guardado and Shi (2007) discussed in their study that lack of interaction between readers and writers could turn online peer feedback into a one-way communication. This created misunderstandings and left the important comments unaddressed. Liu and Sadler (2003) found out in their study that face-to-face communication is more effective than online (MOO) communication. Jurkowitz (2008) discussed that there are nonverbal and social cues that help ESL students to understand the meaning of feedback in face-to-face situations. However, Guardado and Shi (2007) explained that asynchronous feedback could be beneficial for students in some cultures. That is because students could avoid giving direct comments to their friends. To do so, they send a note through web-based tools. This could support the findings from the motivation questionnaire showing that students in face-to-face instruction felt anxious when their friends read their work in their presence and when they had to share ideas in classroom.

#### **4. Teacher's feedback**

Both online and face-to-face instruction received text feedback from the teacher in an asynchronous way. However, in the face-to-face instruction, there was some interaction between the teacher and the students while the teacher walked around the class to check students' progress. These interactions could encourage students to write more, give students some ideas, or help with some grammatical errors. On the other hand, in the online instruction, the teacher was only able to see students' progress as a progress percentage on the class dashboard. The teacher saw the finished work and then gave some feedback on that work. This lack of synchronous feedback could affect students' achievement in each type of instruction. Moreover, from the informal interview, students in the online instruction thought their audience was their classmates. While students in face-to-face instruction thought their teacher was their sole audience.

This interaction between teacher and students in face-to-face instruction could create anxiety. Rezaei and Jafari (2014) investigated the levels, types, and causes of writing anxiety among Iranian EFL students. The results pointed out that the biggest cause of anxiety were cognitive anxiety and the fear of teacher's negative feedback. Therefore, this could make students in face-to-face instruction had more anxiety than online instruction when they submitted their work.

#### **5. Anxiety**

The results of the motivation questionnaire revealed that students in face-to-face instruction have more anxiety in learning activities than online instruction. Although anxiety is associated with low performance among second language learners, this anxiety

could drive students to perform better. Alpert and Haber (1960) classified types of anxieties as facilitative and debilitating anxiety. Facilitative anxiety is seen as a drive to improve performance, while debilitating anxiety blocks a learner's achievement. In a study conducted by Bailey (cited in Brown, 2001) on competitiveness and anxiety in second language learning, facilitative anxiety was one of the keys to success, closely related to competitiveness. Kurt and Gürcan (2010) studied the relationship between students' success with learning strategies and anxiety of students taking web-based and face-to-face instruction in higher education. The result showed that there was a relationship between students' success and students' anxiety with the type of instruction they received. The students in the group taking face-to-face instruction experienced more anxiety of learning than web-based instruction and had higher scores than web-based instruction students. On the other hand, students in online instruction worked at their own pace at their own convenient time. This seems to be a perfect environment for learning. However, students need to have high responsibility and be autonomous in order to reach the course goals. Thus, this could mean that having too much anxiety or too little anxiety could lead to bad performance as Khalaila (2015) showing how anxiety could lead to intrinsic motivation that drives students to perform better on an exam.

### **Recommendations for further research**

Based on the findings of this study, the following are some aspects that could be investigated in further studies;

1. The researcher recommends conducting a study with participants who possess a higher English proficiency level. Thus, this could eliminate the factors that could affect the result such as the negative effects of using word processing. Also, students with a higher English proficiency level could communicate to their classmates better than students with a lower English proficiency level. Therefore, students could make the best use of synchronous and asynchronous tools offered in web 2.0 tools.

2. Blended creative writing courses could be considered for further research. According to the discussion on the possible factors that may have affected the findings in previous section, it seemed students in online instruction missed the benefit of using synchronous interaction. The integration between face-to-face and online instruction could therefore bring the benefit of the two types of instruction.

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