

# Developing English Writing Ability of Grade 6 Students Using the 4 MAT System

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**Abstract**—The objectives of this study were: 1) to study and compare English writing abilities of Grade 6 students before and after using the 4 MAT System, and, 2) to study the students' attitudes towards teaching English writing using the 4 MAT System. This study was based on a one group pretest and posttest design. The sample group consisted of 24 Grade 6 students at a primary school, Thailand. The study was done during the second semester of the 2011 academic year. The research instruments were 6 lesson plans, an English writing ability test, and an attitude questionnaire. The experiment lasted six weeks, four hours a week, yielding twenty-four hours of instruction. Statistical parameters used in this study consisted of percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-test for dependent samples. The findings of this study were as follows. 1. the students' pretest and posttest scores on English writing ability were 35.57 percent and 69.80 percent, respectively. The students' English writing ability was found significantly different at the .01 level. The mean score of the posttest was higher than the pretest. 2. The students' attitude towards teaching English writing using the 4 MAT System was at a good level. ( $\bar{X} = 3.86$ )

**Index Terms**—English writing ability, 4 MAT systems teaching.

## I. INTRODUCTION

English teaching and learning in Thailand is confronted by several problems. From an earlier educational quality assurance in foreign language assessment, it was found that the learners have gained improved knowledge and, teachers' instruction emphasize students' has been effective to a moderate level [1]. One of the findings of this report is that teachers do not consistently employ effective activities during language instruction. In addition, considering the four English language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) it is evident that Thai students still face difficulties, particularly in their writing skills. According to [2], writing is the most essential skill for students who study foreign languages and who plan further studies at a higher level.

From previous studies of teaching English writing at various educational levels in Thailand, it has been found that writing skills have not been successful taught for many reasons. First, teachers who are native Thai and teaching

English lack the know how to motivate students to write in English. Second, scant knowledge of English use causes students to be reluctant to write. Punctuation can be one of the most difficult problems for Thai students. Finally, Thai students fail to conceptualize the topic of their writing.

The 4 MAT System of teaching English consists of learning activities which provide a number of activities focusing on individual differences. Reference [3], developed a teaching cycle which allows the learners to use both the left and right sides of the brains. In constructing learning activities, the cycle is developed to start with use of the left side of the brain them moving to right side. Learners use both sides of the brain. There are 8 steps in the teaching method. Quadrant 1 is to integrate experience with the student's self. It is divided into 2 parts, 1) creating an experience, and, 2) reflecting on the experience. Quadrant 2 is concept formulation. It is divided into 2 more parts, 3) integrating observations into concepts, and, 4) developing theories and concepts. Quadrant 3 is practice and personalization. This is also divided into another 2 parts, 5) working on defined concepts, and, 6) personalizing one's experience. Quadrant 4 is integrating application with experience. It is divided into a final 2 parts, 7) analyzing for usefulness or application, and, 8) doing by one's self and sharing what they do with others. This method arouses the operation of the left and right sides of the human brain. This method has been employed in a number of studies in EFL classrooms. The results of these studies have shown effectiveness in improving achievement in using English for communication [4], [5]. However, this method has never been employed in teaching English writing skills. According to the aforementioned, the researcher had adapted this teaching technique for use in writing classes using the following procedures, 1) Motivation, which involves creating an experience and reflecting on that experience, 2) Concept Development consists of integrating experience into concepts as well developing theories and concepts, 3) Practice involves working on definition of thoughts and personalizing experience, 4) Application consists of analyzing usefulness and application as well as exchanging ideas with others. The goal of this research was to develop English writing abilities of Thai students using the 4 MAT System to teach Grade 6 students at Anuban Nonghanwittayayon School, Udon Thani. Using this teaching technique, Grade 6 students improved their English writing abilities as well as their attitude towards teaching English writing.

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## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were:

- To study and compare English writing abilities of Grade 6 students before and after learning using the 4 MAT System teaching.
- To study the students' attitude towards teaching English writing resulting from use of the 4 MAT System.

## III. HYPOTHESIS

Grade 6 students improved their English writing abilities as a result of learning using the 4 MAT System and their attitude towards teaching English writing at a good level.

## IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

### A. Population and Sample

The population consisted of Grade 6 students at Anuban Nonghanwittayon School. The sample was 24 students of Grade 6/2 during semester 2, academic year 2011. Sampling was done as a Cluster random sample.

### B. Variables

There were two variables. The dependent variable was teaching English writing using the 4 MAT. The independent variables were English writing ability and students' attitudes towards learning English writing when using the 4 MAT System.

### C. Duration of the Experiment

This study was conducted during semester 2, academic year 2011 for 6 weeks, 4 hours a week, and for a total of 24 hours.

### D. Contents

The teaching content used was drawn from various English textbooks available to Grade 6 students. Materials covered several topics, including My Family, My Future life, My School, My Leisure Activity, My Town and My Country.

## V. METHODOLOGY

This study was done using a one group pretest-posttest design. The processes were as follows.

### A. Data Collection

- An English writing ability test was used as a pretest.
- Six lesson plans were conducted using the 4 MAT System.
- The English writing ability test was used as a posttest.
- An attitude questionnaire was employed.

### B. Instruments

The instruments of this study were the following.

- Six lesson plans using the 4 MAT System for use in teaching Grade 6 students. Each lesson plan was for 4 hours. Six lesson plans required 24 hours in total.

- An English writing ability test, asking the students to write 7-10 sentences on an assigned topic.
- An attitude questionnaire towards student attitudes about teaching writing using the 4 MAT System. The questionnaire rated student opinions positively and negatively in the format of Likert scale.

## VI. DATA ANALYSIS

Mean, percentage, and standard deviations of measured quantities were determined and t-test for dependent samples done for hypothesis testing. For students' attitude towards English writing ability, mean and standard deviation were employed.

## VII. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The average student pretest and posttest scores on English writing ability were 35.57 percent and 69.80 percent respectively. The students' English writing ability was found significantly different at the .01 level. The mean score on the posttest was higher than that of the pretest.

The students' attitude towards teaching English writing using the 4 MAT Systems were measured and found to be at a good level.

## VIII. DISCUSSION

From the research results, it was found that the students' English writing abilities after teaching using the 4 MAT System were significantly higher than before the instruction. The reasons might be that after being taught eight using the 8 step method of the 4 MAT System [6], the students have learned some essential knowledge in English writing. Step 1 is creating experience using vocabulary. Step 2 is analyzing experience. Step 3 is adapting experience and conceptual expression. Step 4 is developing theory, concepts and additional learning. From these steps the students learned how to share and present their knowledge of vocabulary, learning that they can implement in their writing. Grammar, structure, and punctuation were reviewed and employed in writing practice in Stage 5. Stage 6 is where students learned to further improve their writing. Stage 7 is analysis and application of the components in English writing. In Stage 8 students exchange their writing with friends in the classroom.

Through these stages the students had opportunities in learning to more confidently write in English. The teacher acted as an advisor or an assistant in providing help when they needed. Lastly the students presented of their own writing to class.

The results of this research confirmed the effectiveness of employing the 4 MAT System to teach developmental English writing skills. Results are also were consistent with other studies conducted in EFL classrooms. Nachaiveng studied achievement in English using the 4 MAT System with secondary level students. It was found that student learning achievement in English were higher than the set criterion (70 percent). This study was also consistent with Kiewkun, who examined achievement in learning English for

communication using the 4 MAT System with Grade 5 students. These results showed that the students' English learning achievement was significantly higher than before the instruction.

In addition, the students' attitude towards learning English writing using the 4 MAT teaching was found to be at a good level. It might be that the steps of teaching are sequential and the students are supported by knowledge in each of the components. The students were provided with opportunity in learning essential vocabulary, grammar and samples of writing of the proposed topics. Their confidence in writing and sharing their experience is built by presenting their work in the classroom.

#### IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The teachers should study the 4 MAT System teaching methods carefully so that they may design and construct materials appropriately to motivate and encourage students to engage the activities.

Supported students to study and compare their English writing with the students in different level.

Study and compare English writing abilities of students taught using methods other than the 4 MAT System. Other include creative writing or writing English using a story line method.

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