HS033

Using Mind Mapping Technique to Improve English Writing Ability of Lao EFL College Students

Souliyaphone Phorthilath[1]

Nawamin Prachanant[2]

Akkaraphon Nuemaihom[3]

Abstract

This study aimed: 1) to compare the Lao EFL college students' English writing ability before and after learning through mind mapping technique, and 2) to compare the students' self-efficacy toward English writing ability before and after learning through mind mapping technique. The samples of this study were 24 third year English major students at Savannakhet Teacher Training College (STTC), Lao PDR, in academic year 2017-2018. They were selected by simple random sampling technique using the classrooms as a sampling unit. The research instruments were four lesson plans, the pre-test and post-test of writing performance test, and self-efficacy questionnaire. The statistics used to analyze the collect data were mean, standard deviation, and dependent samples t-test. The findings were as follows:

1. The students' English writing ability using mind mapping of students' post-test mean score was higher than pre-test mean scores with statistically significant difference at 0.01 level.

2. The students' self-efficacy towards the mind mapping technique to improve English writing ability was higher than before learning in overall with statistically significance at 0.01 level.

The findings can be significant for teachers and students to develop effective teaching and learning regarding writing using mind mapping technique to improve writing ability in the EFL settings.

Keywords: Writing ability, Mind mapping technique, Lao EFL college students

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[1-3]English Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University

Introduction

English language plays a very crucial role as the predominant tool for communication in the global community. English has become the crucial recognized international language for communication. When people from countries where English is not the first or official languages come together, they have to choose a language to communicate. Very often, the language chosen is English. Besides communication purpose, English is used as a means to transfer thoughts and cultures and to create good relationships between people in different countries. As a result, English has become an international language and is widely used as a medium for understanding and exchanging ideas among people all over the world. In addition, English is an international language. It is highly significant in various aspects: education, business, commercial, technology, tourism, political communication, medicine, sports, vehicles, engineering, etc.

Nowadays, English is really important for Lao people because many of investors from several countries are allowed to invest in Lao PDR these days, and the various foreign companies are built. So, people who plan to work in Lao PDR, must be proficient in using English. Therefore, English is really crucial and need to be teaching in school

subjects. Because of the influence and importance of English, Lao people cannot neglect in learning English. However, for more than 20 years at Savannakhet Teacher Training College (STTC) is training students to be teachers mostly for two provinces as Savannakhet province and Khammouan province. Especially, the new generation of Laos who plan to study abroad and people in domestic who plan to work in international companies, want to get better jobs and a higher salary. Furthermore, Lao is one member of Association of South-East Asian Nation (ASEAN) that has joined in 1997, and it is also the Asian Economic Community (AEC) epoch that English is necessary to be used in communicating. By these rationales, Lao people have been paying more attention in learning and teaching English because it is the first priority foreign language which needs in both private and public sectors (Singphong. 2008).

Writing is one of important skills used for communication in day-to-day life. People use writing as an instrument to fulfill their purposes, explain ideas, thoughts and memories into writing forms such as sentences, paragraphs, and compositions that convey to reader via applications, e-mails, letters, memorandums, reports, etc. Although writing is as crucial as listening, speaking, and reading, it is not easy to teach

writing for students who learn English as Foreign Language (EFL). In Lao PDR, writing is considered as the first technique importance of four skills language and is taught formally from elementary school up to the university level. Based on Writing 2 Subject in 2010 curriculum of Lao PDR, English has become a compulsory subject which is not only learned in primary and secondary schools, but also colleges, universities and some of private schools have to teach writing. According to Richard and Renandya (2002), writing is not simply speech written down on paper. Learning to write is not a natural extension of learning. Writing requires systematic instruction and practice. It is more restricted and generally follows a standardized form of grammar, structure, organization and there are many writing difficulties, such as how to generate and organize ideas by using an appropriate choice of vocabulary, sentences, and paragraph organization and how to put such idea into intelligible text.

Even though, English writing has been being taught in Lao PDR so many years, particularly in STTC, but the students are not still expressed on learning writing skills that is the cause of affecting themselves to be poor proficiency. Some of students seem to be confused in generating ideas when writing. According to the

window observation and participating in teaching class, the researcher notices that the students are afraid of writing because they could not write accordingly to the topics assigned. They are reluctance to write as they do not know how to start, or which vocabulary they should use in the sentence. Whenever they write, they are usually using wrong grammar and structure. They feel confused using tenses to construct sentences, and could not arrange the words into sentences.

To solve the above problems, the researcher has reviewed various research works and innovations of teaching languages, the researcher assumes that mind mapping might be appropriate to be used to improve students' writing ability as well. Mind mapping is the innovation of teaching method which the contents and the purposes of teaching are integrated that the learners can practice the writing skills accurately. The learners use English as a learning instrument in content and doing activities. Buzan (2005; cited in Sounthalavong, 2016, p.2) states that mind mapping is a very powerful tool for brainstorming, creative thinking, problem solving, organizing ideas and note taking. It is an important technique that improves the way to record information, supports and enhances creative problem solving. It helps learners see the way that pieces of

information fit together. Various researchers (e.g. Aquariza, 2009; Davis, 2010) state that mind mapping is appropriate to promote students' writing ability proficiently.

To make more emphasis, mind mapping should be applied in the English writing classroom. As far as the researcher knows, there is not any mind mapping used in Laos PDR, therefore, this research could be the pioneer study in Lao PDR. Therefore, the researcher is interested in using mind mapping to apply in classroom teaching to improve students' English writing ability at Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Lao PDR. It is expected that mind mapping will highly motivate students' interest of English writing to get more efficiency to improve writing, and become more rapid in many skills of writing ability.

Research Objectives

1. To compare Lao EFL college students' writing ability before and after learning through a mind mapping technique.

2. To compare the students' self-efficacy toward English writing ability before and after learning through mind mapping technique

Methods

Population and samples

The population of this research included 196 third year English major

students who enrolled in Writing 2 Course in the second semester of academic year 2017-2018 at 8 Teacher Training Colleges in all over Lao PDR. The eight colleges are Savannakhet Teacher Training College, LuangPrabang Teacher Training College, Khangkhay Teacher Training College, Salavan Teacher Training College, Pakse Teacher Training College, Bankeun Teacher Training College, Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College, and Luang Nam Tha Teacher Training College. Each college offers only one class of third year English major of students.

The samples of this research were 24 third year English major students who enrolled in Writing 2 Course in the second semester of academic year 2017-2018 at Savannakhet Teacher Training College, Kaysone Phomvihan district, Savannakhet province, Lao PDR. The samples were selected by using simple random sampling technique by using colleges as a sampling unit.

Research Instruments

1. Lesson Plans

According to the schedule of learning and teaching of third year English normal course of academic year 2017-2018, Writing 2 Course was taught two periods per week which included three hours per each period. Two types of writing were employed in this study: narrative and descriptive. The

first two lesson plans focused on narrative writing and the last two lesson plans focused on descriptive writing. Therefore, the four lesson plans (excluding orientation, pre-test, post-test and answering questionnaire) were conducted by the researcher.

2. Writing Tests (Pre-test and Post-test)

The writing tests for third year English major students were conducted by the researcher according to the four lesson plans through the use of mind mapping technique which they had already learned. The pre-test and post-test comprised of two types: narrative writing and descriptive writing. Each student drew slot to get the topic and type of test before the test.

3. Satisfaction Questionnaire

The questionnaire on students' satisfaction towards mind mapping to improve students' writing ability was constructed by the researcher. There were 3 parts of this questionnaire form. The first part was about personal information which is involved gender, age, and time of starting to learn English. The second part consisted of 12 statements of students' satisfactions toward the lesson plans using mind mapping, and the last part was about comments or recommendations of students.

Data Collection

To collect the data, the present study included lesson plans, achievement tests, and self-efficacy questionnaire. The procedures for collecting data were as follows:

1. A pre-test was given to all of samples at the beginning of a class. The test consisted of one narrative writing and one descriptive writing which the samples could choose the topics by drawing slot to get the topics and types of test before the test. And then two types of test were done at the same time for 90 minutes. They had to write at least 100-150 words within 90 minutes. There were 100 points for each test evaluated by the criteria of the writing of the students consisting of organization, development, sentence structure, word choice/grammar usage, and mechanics, adapted from West Virginia writing Rubric (2013; cited in Bunyong.2016).

2. After doing a pre-test, the samples were asked to fill out the questionnaire focusing on their self-efficacy toward writing before learning via mind mapping technique.

3. The samples were orientated to understand about mind mapping technique. Then, they were taught by utilizing mind mapping technique and did the activities for 24 periods.

4. A post-test was administered with all of the samples after attending the course for 90 minutes.

5. After doing a post-test, the samples were asked to fill out the questionnaire focusing on their self-efficacy toward writing after learning via mind mapping technique.

Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed to find out percentage, mean, standard deviation, and dependent samples t-test. The details and procedures of data analysis were shown as follows:

1. In order to evaluate the students' writing ability before and after being taught through mind mapping technique, the pre-test and post-test were scored by the researcher and two experts, then the score of each student were divided by 3 and computed to find out the percentage (%), mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (S.D).

2. Dependent samples t-test was used to compare the difference between pre-test and post-test mean scores to detect a significant difference set at 0.05 level.

3. Dependent samples t-test was used to compare the difference between the self-efficacy before and after writing by using mind mapping technique to detect a significant difference set at. 0.05 level.

Results

1. A comparison of Lao EFL college students' English writing ability before and after learning through a mind mapping technique

This section reports the results of the analysis of the quantitative data from the achievement tests employed in this study to compare students' writing ability before and after learning through using mind mapping technique. Pre-test scores (100 scores) and post-test scores (100 scores) were compared to find out the statistically significant difference as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: A comparison of the difference between pre-test and post-test mean scores

Learning Achievement	n	Total Scores	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	t
Pre-test	24	1.403.33	58.47	3.80	21.00**
Post-test	24	1.881.82	78.41	3.32	

**significant difference at 0 .01

As shown in Table1, it indicates that the students who learned English writing through mind mapping technique had higher writing ability on post-test mean scores ($\overline{\text{x}}$ = 78.41) than in pre-test mean scores ($\overline{\text{x}}$ = 58.47) at 0.01 of the statistically significant difference.

2. A comparison of the students' self-efficacy toward English writing ability before and after learning technique

This section reports the results of the analysis of the quantitative data from the questionnaire used in this study to compare students' self-efficacy before and after learning through mind mapping technique. The results were shown in Table 2.

Table 2: A comparison of students' self-efficacy toward English writing ability before and after learning through mind mapping technique

Statements	Before Treatment		After Treatment		t
	$\overline{\text{x}}$	S.D.	$\overline{\text{x}}$	S.D.	
1. I enjoy the activities provided in the lesson plans of writing by using mind mapping technique.	3.33	0.56	4.54	0.50	8.21**
2. Learning writing through the mind mapping technique is easy and useful in daily life.	3.67	0.56	4.54	0.50	5.37**
3. Writing through the mind mapping technique is fun to learn and practice.	3.67	0.56	4.71	0.46	6.79**
4. Learning writing through the mind mapping technique can improve my writing ability.	3.42	0.50	4.63	0.49	7.59**
5. I am confident in writing after I have learned the steps of writing through mind mapping technique.	3.63	0.64	4.50	0.51	4.76**
6. The contents and activities for practicing writing are relevant.	3.67	0.63	4.58	0.50	4.83**
7. The topics and activities are suitable to my English level.	3.63	0.57	4.75	0.44	7.43**

Statements	Before Treatment		After Treatment		t
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	
8. Activities and exercises of each lesson plan are suitable for my English background knowledge.	3.83	0.63	4.63	0.49	4.65**
9. Learning writing through the mind mapping technique will enhance my learning.	3.67	0.56	4.79	0.41	10.26**
10. I feel motivated when learning English writing by doing and practicing all lessons.	3.75	0.60	4.63	0.49	5.37**
11. I think I can writing English better in general topics.	3.50	0.65	4.67	0.48	7.00**
12. I have a positive attitude through learning English writing after learning the lesson plans on the mind mapping technique.	3.92	0.58	4.83	0.38	6.86**
Grand total	3.63	0.15	4.64	0.08	6.50**

** Significant difference at 0.01 level

As shown in Table 2, it indicates that after treatment the third year English major students had higher self-efficacy with using mind mapping technique from the achievement test than before treatment both in overall and each item at 0.01 level of statistically significant difference.

Discussion

1. A comparison of Lao EFL college students' English writing ability before and after learning through mind mapping technique

The result disclosed that the students' English writing ability post-test mean score was higher than the pre-test mean score with statistically significant difference at 0.01 level. This could be explained that the lesson plans and tests using mind mapping technique are efficient because students could improve their writing ability after learning, because they are developed in systematically and continuously to be appropriate with students' levels. Also, the students' writing ability is improved after learning proficiently. They can imagine and remember what to writing. Mind mapping could help them to get the ideas, remind the words or phrases which supported by

their own background knowledge and create the sentences by their own ideas included some words or grammar, and can be used include the content that teacher provided them, to make them more confidences to writing English.

This finding is similar to Buzan (2007: 36) who stated mind mapping technique can help the student as its more easily converted into a draft, then the students can see the relationship between ideas and encourages them to group certain ideas together as they proceed, as well as Davis (2010: 8-9) who confirmed that using mind mapping technique can help the learners for planning, communication, to be more creative, economize the time, problem solving, attention centered arranged and explaining things, to memorize more be better, study more quickly and efficient, see "all the picture". Also, Davis (2010: 9) stated that mind mapping technique helps activate all of the brain, finishing the brain for the low mental, enable to the researcher centered on the topic, help learners to show the connected between part of information that separate, gives clearly explanation to all and detail, enable us to make concept grouping help learners to compare it, and requires us to center attention on the topic that help shift information about that from short memory to long memory. Therefore, the four lesson plans using mind mapping technique are very effective to improve their English writing. Similar to the studies of Istianah (2011) and Nuanmanee (2014) who mentioned that the student' writing achievement score form the post-test was higher than the pre-test significantly at 0.01 level.

2. A comparison of students' self-efficacy toward English writing before and after learning through using mind mapping technique

The result illustrated that students' self-efficacy toward English writing was higher than before learning through using mind mapping technique both in overall and each item with statistically significance difference at 0.01 level. This means that mind mapping technique can improved their more self-efficacy toward writing. This could be considered the research reviewed the related literature on self-efficacy questionnaire. Then the researcher adopted and modified writing self- writing questionnaire from Pajares, Hartyle, and Valiante (2001), and Nuanmanee (2014) into a list and proposed the statements to the thesis advisors to examine and give some suggestion for the correctness and appropriateness. After that, the research improved the questionnaire

based on their suggestion. Moreover, the questionnaire was examined and evaluated by the experts about the validity quality. Again, the research improved the questionnaire following the suggestion. Also, the questionnaire was tried out with third year English major students at Savannakhet Teacher Training College who were not the samples to find out the reliability before using with the samples. It can be one effective teaching approach that teacher and relevant person who are interested in this technique can apply in their careers to help their students to learn effectively.

This finding is similar to Sandadth (1999), Sinlapasart (2001) and Prachanant (2015), who claimed that using role play to improve Thai EFL university students' speaking ability on self- efficacy. In addition, the students needed editing writing from another person less than before the treatment. These could be concluded that the students had more self-efficacy toward writing because at last they were able to write themselves within the time given and do not need other people to check their writing. Also, the opinion from the open -ended questions revealed that most students stated that mind mapping technique made them know how to start writing in difference topics, be more confident, and be better in writing.

Overall, it could be noticed that students have positive attitudes toward using mind mapping technique to upgrade their writing abilities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the mind mapping techniques could bring good effects to students' writing motivation, and it could upgrade their ideas on writing ability. The results of the research will be as the guidelines for developing teaching, learning and research works for English teachers, other educators and persons who are interested in teaching writing by using mind mapping technique. Hopefully, this research will be as guideline for the novices who are investigating a research and also other people who strive for new knowledge learning, especially in colleges and universities. Mind mapping technique can be one effective teaching approach that teacher and relevant person who are interested in this technique can apply in their careers to help their students to learn effectively.

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