

## Developing English writing instructional materials for second year university students of English Department

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### Abstract

This research was aimed at developing English writing instructional materials that are appropriate for second-year students of English Department at Champasak University. This research was a Research and Development study using model proposed by Jolly and Bolitho (1998). The subjects of this research were 30 learners who are students of English Department at Champasak University. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The results of needs analysis showed that students need to learn about (1) writing process, (2) students need to know and learn more about types of text, (3) students need to learn more about types of letter and (4) students need to learn about the cultures around them. The findings revealed that the English writing instructional materials in terms of aims and approaches, design and organization, language contents, skills, topics, methodology and practical consideration were appropriate for second-year students of English Department.

**Keywords:** teaching writing, writing process, writing instructional materials, developing English writing instructional materials.

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## INTRODUCTION

English is one subject that is chosen in the school and university to be taught as a foreign or second language in certain country. English is not only to be compulsory subject in the school, but also becomes the international language that is used to communicate worldwide. So, it becomes important language for international communication and workforces. Unfortunately, students have not achieved and master in English as well. It become one of many issues and obstacles for students to communicate in international stage.

As an international language, English is very influential with regards to the role of communication in the world. One of the means to communicate each other is writing and it is noted as the difficult for learning. Writing is important and necessary for both work and school. Students' lack of proficiency in speaking and writing limits their communication with other people on the international stage because writing

is an important part of communication. As stated by (Akram & Malik, 2010; Huy, 2015, p. 54; McDonough et al., 2012; Sadiku, 2015), writing is one of the four skills of language which is very important. As a result, writing can be seen as the main language skill which is used to communicate for international cooperation. Kam (2002) states that there have been suggestions to make English the official second language in Laos since 1997. Besides, writing is also widely used to help communicate with and understand one another, and written communication is constantly developing and becoming a crucial skill in global communication.

Writing is one of the four skills that is very important for everyone. Writing well is a big challenge for both native and non-native students (Bhowmik et al., 2014; Halim et al., 2019; Muslim, 2014, p. 105; Obisuru & Purbani, 2016). For students, writing is not an easy task to achieve or master, and it is considered one of the

most difficult skills to learn because writers have to think about the mechanics and elements of writing. Along with Fareed et al. (2016) mentioned that the majority problem is due to incompetence in syntax, coherence, idea expansion and lack of vocabulary.

Writing is extensively used in higher education and students must be able to achieve this skill. As the government has stated that language education should develop language competencies, with special emphasis on writing according to the literacy level set up for every level of education. Also in the curriculum at the university level, there is a need for students to be able to communicate both in oral and written form. It is clear that writing ability should be improved and all students have to master writing skill to achieve their purposes in education.

Teaching and learning seem to be simple issues that are related to people lives as the people who have been studying in different level of school from primary to higher education. Teaching and learning are not the only process of transferring the knowledge to the human especially students, but also relate to the roles of teachers and students who participate in the activities in the classroom. Nowadays. The roles of teachers in teaching in a school or university are very important because teachers become main key in providing knowledge to their students.

In order to facilitate teaching and learning writing activities, materials should be applicable to the students' real life and enable students to learn effectively. In this condition, materials which are used in teaching writing are very important. As the students encounter the examples and material introduced in the classroom in daily life, instruction expands beyond the realm of the classroom. The students, who encounter the topics, examples and materials discussed in the class outside the classroom, would establish a connection between the course and their lives (Doğan, 2014). Furthermore, Tackling with authentic and realistic activities that encourage students to collaborate in a complex structure shows that learning takes place in an authentic manner (Herrington et al., 2006). As it is supported by (Mishan, 2004) who stated that authentic texts provide the best source of rich and varied comprehensible input for language learners.

Richards and Rodgers (2014) suggest that subject content can be specified by the instructional materials, even if there is no existing syllabus, but instructional materials should cover

the main points in the syllabus, such as time allocation, with other attention and detail to the particular syllabus items or tasks required. Instructional materials are undoubtedly important resource materials that teachers can use when planning and carrying out instruction (Tan-Florendo, 2012, p. 159). In addition, instructional materials also define or imply the day-to-day learning objectives that collectively constitute the goals of the syllabus. Moreover, Richards (2001) has commented that instructional materials generally serve as the basis of much of the language input that learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom.

According to Richards (2006) effective instructional materials in language teaching are shaped by consideration of a number of factors including teacher, learner, and contextual variables. Mathew and Grover (2012) states that the use of instructional materials make teaching effective as it enables learners to participate actively in classroom instruction. All these views suggest that the use of instructional materials can improved students' performance.

In this case, instructional materials are able to help the teacher in order to know what and how the class is going to learn, and what the learning objectives are. They also added that the role of instructional materials within a method or instructional system will reflect decisions concerning the primary goal of materials. Meanwhile, the instructional materials enable students to practice the tasks and familiarize themselves with the procedure of learning, allowing students to communicate with their friends and work with less help from the teacher. As the result, in the process of teaching the language, the role of the teacher is very important. Furthermore, the more important thing is the materials that the teacher uses to teach the students.

Both teacher and teaching materials together should support students to achieve the class goals of learning the language fluently. Thus, courses that are instructed using these materials should not focus on the instructional objective, but the instructional objective should be a part of the effort of the teacher to achieve the main objective by utilizing the material as it is used in a real-life situation. In other words, for the materials that are brought to the classroom environment to be considered authentic, teachers should organize authentic tasks for the use of these materials (Jacobson et al., 2003).

The material can be anything that used to assist English learning process. It can be the

instructional, experiential, or exploratory as long as it can inform the students about the language use, provide the experience of the language in use, stimulate language use and support the students to discover the language based on their needs (Dat, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003, 2008). (Omabe, 2006) asserts that instructional materials are central in the teaching and learning of English language because they are used to compliment efficiency of a teacher, and effectiveness in lesson delivery.

Instructional materials differ according to the needs of the learners and the environment (Njoku, 2015, p. 4). As the result, the instructional materials are very important for teaching and learning the language. The teacher should provide good materials and a clear explanation for students. In fact, at Champasak University, there is a writing textbook that is used to teach Second Year students of the English Department. Since Champasak University was established, the old textbook that is used to teach writing has never been updated, and there were no additional textbooks to give more information about writing.

In response to the rational above, research on developing English writing instructional materials for Second Year students of the English Department is necessary. The main purpose of the research is to develop English writing instructional materials that meet the students' needs to overcome the difficulties in their efforts to learn writing skills. Every generation of students learned the same things, and the same information was provided by the English Department. Clearly, Champasak University has a lack of materials and textbooks to teach their students. In addition, the teachers did not combine and develop new materials or other documents to better serve their students.

## **METHODS**

This study used the quantitative and qualitative methodology, which allows learners to explore perceptions and processes in context. The participants were 30 members of English Department at Champasak University and they are from different background of English knowledge. In this research, we used questionnaires and interviews to gather information of students. The majority of the learners want to learn how to write a paragraph correctly. Moreover, it would be better to have additional writing materials to help them in learning. For more clarity, this study has used the model of (Jolly & Bolitho, 2011, p. 98)

that is under the umbrella of research and development (R&D) used by (Gall et al., 2003). This method is an industry-based development model used to design new products. The procedure used in this study is adapted from the model proposed by (Dat, 2008; Jolly & Bolitho, 2011; Tomlinson, 2003, 2008). For having the suitable model for this research, the researcher has analyzed several models in order to decide which model is suitable and practice for this research. Therefore, the suitable model is the model of Jolly & Bolitho (2011) which consists of six steps. They are Identification of the problems, Exploration of needs, Contextual Realization, Pedagogical Realization, Physical Production, Use, and evaluation. (Kochhar, 2000) supported that instructional materials are very significant learning and teaching tools. He suggested the needs for teachers to find necessary materials for instruction to supplement what textbooks provide in order to broaden concepts and arouse students' interests in the subject.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Language in the classroom, 3 participants (10%) spoke the Lao language 25% and spoke English 75%. 19 participants (63.33%) spoke the Lao language 50% and English 50%. 7 participants (23.33%) spoke Lao language 75% and English 25%. And only a person (3.33%) who spoke English 100%.

As a result, English department students had a different level of English knowledge. As the data show, only one student could speak English in class 100% and the other 19 students spoke English just 50% in the classroom.

The results show, students had different learning background about four skills of language. In addition, students said that writing process was not always taught. That point makes students need to learn more about the process of writing. Many students knew a little bit about kinds of text but were still poor in composing them. Moreover, students did not know punctuation well, nor how to arrange sentences into good paragraphs. Thus, most students could write sentences but they still lacked knowledge about writing letters. Furthermore, many students also need to learn about writing some types of the letter which will help them to communicate with other people in their future work.

Syllabus and lesson plan were the next steps being developed after the results of needs analysis. They were designed based on needs analysis data. Moreover, the syllabus contains the

unit name and title, indicators and objectives. In detail, lesson plan includes the unit title, objective, teacher' activity, students' activity, steps in teaching and assessment.

The materials were formulated and arranged in the appropriate places. The lessons were provided and the activities were created according to the lessons which were presented. The pictures were placed on suitable topics and instructions were provided to help students to do the writing activities.

#### Unit 1 "Introduction to Writing"

This unit is about writing and some elements or skills that are involved in writing. It consists of seven headings. The first heading is warm up, which include some questions and a little bit of information about writing before getting into the main point of the lesson. The second heading is about the steps of writing. The heading presents the steps or processes of writing a paragraph and examples are also presented. The third heading pertains to punctuation marks. It presents the nine punctuation marks which are used in writing sentences and paragraphs. The fourth heading is capital letters. This heading shows examples of the use of capitals and some tips for using capital letters are also included. The fifth heading is about conjunctions. The heading presents some conjunctions which are commonly used in writing, such as "and, but and or and so." The sixth heading is pronouns. This heading shows the personal pronouns which are most commonly used in sentences. The last heading is about prepositions. This heading presents some prepositions that are commonly used in writing.

#### Unit 2 "Let's Read and Write"

This unit is of different types of text. There are five headings in this unit. The first heading is warm up and there are some questions about reading texts at the beginning of the lesson. The second heading is procedure text. The heading shows the definition of this type of text, the purpose, generic structure and language features. An example of procedure text is also presented and some exercises for students are also included. This heading also presents some grammar points about simple present tense. The third heading is descriptive text. This heading also shows the definition, purpose, generic structure and language features of the text. The example of the text is also presented, and like the section before, exercises are also included. The fourth heading is about narrative text. This section includes the

definition, purpose, generic structure and language features of the narrative text. Examples of the type of text and exercises are also available. Additionally, this heading presents grammar points about simple past tense. The fifth heading is recount text. It also introduces the various components of the text. Examples and exercises are also included.

#### Unit 3 "Getting to Know Letters"

This unit is about letters. There are seven headings. The first is warm up and there are some guiding questions before the unit gets into the lesson. The second heading is of the types of letters. The third heading describes the parts of a letter. The fourth heading introduces a friendly letter. The fifth heading is about business letters. The sixth heading describes cover letters. The last heading is about memos. Every heading consists of an explanation and there are exercises for students to practice in each heading.

#### Unit 4 "Through the Cultures"

In unit 4, it is about culture. There are five headings in this unit. The first is the warm up. The second heading is about cultural greetings. The third heading is about clothing in culture. The fourth heading talks about the culture of eating and cuisine. The last heading is about religion. In this unit, students can practice their writing through learning about the culture. This unit presents cultures that students are familiar with. This is taken into consideration to help students produce content like sentences and paragraphs more easily.

Before the materials were tried out, the materials were reviewed by an expert in materials development. The revision judged the materials using a validation sheet provided by the researcher. The validation sheet was developed using Likert scales.

The validation results by the materials expert judgment were presented in Table 1. They consisted of 28 statements categorized into seven groups based on the aims and approaches, design and organization, language contents, skills, topics, methodology, practical and consideration.

Table 1 shows that the validation score on materials appropriateness is 25.5 with the average mean score 3.65. 7 items categorized as very good. As a result, the English writing instructional materials which were developed by the researcher were appropriate for students because the average mean score for all aspects were 3.65 > 3.25 to 4.00.

After the materials were tried out, the evaluation was the next step. The first stage of the evaluation was using questionnaires to obtain students opinions about the materials. The results of the questionnaires were analyzed and are shown in Table 2. Based on the data analyzed in Table 2, students agreed that the materials met their needs and were appropriate for them. The average mean score for aims and purposes was 3.39. The materials were categorized as very good since  $3.39 > 3.25$  to 4.00.

Based on the data analyzed in Table 3, students agreed that the materials met their needs and were appropriate for them. The average mean score for the topic was 3.32. The materials were categorized as very good because  $3.32 > 3.25$  to 4.00.

Based on the data analyzed in the Table 5, students agreed that the materials met their needs and were appropriate for them. The average mean score for design and organization was 3.44. The materials were categorized as very good, because  $3.44 > 3.25$  to 4.00.

Table 1. The Result of Materials Validation (Expert Judgment)

No.	Aspects	Mean
1.	Aims and Approaches	3.50
2.	Design and Organization	3.66
3.	Language Contents	3.66
4.	Skills	3.75
5.	Topics	4.00
6.	Methodology	3.60
7.	Practical and Considerations	3.33
Overall Scores		25.5
Average Mean		3.65
Conclusion		Very Good

Table 2. The Result of Aims and Purposes Data Analysis

Aims and Purposes Appropriateness		
No.	Statements	Mean
1.	The materials are appropriate with my English level	3.43
2.	The materials cover grammar points which are related to the writing skills	3.33
3.	The materials help me to overcome the difficulties of writing in English	3.23
4.	The materials let me know about procedure texts, descriptive texts, narrative texts and recount texts.	3.40
5.	The materials let me know about other cultures	3.50
6.	The activities are appropriate for the topic	3.46
Overall Scores		20.35
Average Mean		3.39
Conclusion		Very Good

Table 3. The Result of Topics Data Analysis

Topic Appropriateness		
No.	Statements	Mean
7.	The topics vary	3.26
8.	The topics are relevant to my interest	3.33
9.	The topics are related to my culture	3.36
Overall Scores		9.95
Average Mean		3.32
Conclusion		Very Good

Table 4. The Result of Design and Organization Data Analysis

No.	Statements	Mean
10.	From the cover, I can know the content of the materials	3.30
11.	Texts are organized from easy to difficult	3.36
12.	The activities are suitable for individual, pair work and group work.	3.53
13.	Numbers, fonts, and layout are appropriate	3.56
Overall Scores		13.75
Average Mean		3.44
Conclusion		Very Good

Table 5. The Result of Language Content Data Analysis

Language Content Appropriateness		
No.	Statements	Mean
14.	The prewriting step helps me to get more ideas about writing	3.26
15.	The drafting step helps me to provide adequate vocabulary	3.40
16.	Questions at warm up parts let me know what I am going to learn	3.20
17.	The activities provided after the lesson help me to practice more about that topic	3.33
18.	The writing processes are presented along with the examples make me understand about writing process	3.43
19.	Conjunction and preposition help me a lot about writing a paragraph	3.60
20.	The texts are not difficult and understandable	3.10
21.	The vocabulary in the texts is easy to understand	3.56
22.	The explanations about structures of the texts make me understand about types of texts	3.43
23.	Grammar points make me understand the language features of the texts	3.36
24.	The vocabulary activities are related to the texts	3.43
25.	The explanations of letters help me to understand about letters and parts of letters	3.26
26.	The examples of letters help me to learn to write the letter	3.06
27.	“Through the cultures” lets me know more about other culture and be aware of my own culture	3.13
28.	The instructions are easy to understand	3.30
29.	The activities are not difficult to do	3.33
30.	The writing activities provide vocabulary which makes my writing easier	3.36
31.	Building vocabulary activity helps me to recall my knowledge of vocabulary	3.36
Overall Scores		59.9
Average Mean		3.33
Conclusion		Very Good

As the result of the data analyzed in table 16, students agreed that the materials met their needs and were appropriate for them. The average mean score for language content was 3.33. The materials were categorized as very good because  $3.33 > 3.25$  to 4.00.

From the interview, students stated that the materials are good and interesting. As the information obtained, the researcher concludes that the materials are appropriate for their English level. The text contained new vocabulary and also related to the students’ cultures. However, there were some difficult words that they could not understand and could not translate into Lao. Students also stated that the topics are very clear and interesting for them. The activities in the materials are not too difficult to understand and it is possible to work in groups as well as individually because the instructions are clear. Moreover, the most interesting aspect of the materials are the pictures that help them to understand the vocabulary. The pictures also motivate the students to learn writing.

### CONCLUSION

As the conclusion of this research, students need to know more about writing process and the important elements of writing. Furthermore, students need to know about types of text and its structure. Moreover, they need to learn about

letters. Besides, students also need to know about other cultures.

The data analyzed of the appropriate evaluation toward writing production, it can be concluded that the materials cover the students’ needs and their learning preferences. In addition, these English writing instructional materials are appropriate for the Second University Students of the English Department, Faculty of Education, at Champasak University.

As the evaluation results show, the materials are appropriate for Second Year University Students of English Department. Furthermore, the results also show that the materials can help and improve students to write sentences and paragraph better.

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