The Effects of Problem-Based Learning on Improving Matthayomsuksa 6 Students' English Descriptive Paragraph Writing

Abadee Cheadae

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as an
International Language
Prince of Songkla University
2019

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Author   Mr. Abadee Cheadae

Major Program   Teaching English as an International Language

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Candidate

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การเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษแบบบรรยายของนักเรียน
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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยครั้งนี้มีสามประการคือ 1) เพื่อเปรียบเทียบผลการใช้วิธีการสอน 2 วิธี ได้แก่ วิธีการสอนโดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน และวิธีการสอนโดยไม่ใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐานต่อการพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษแบบบรรยายของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 2) เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อการเรียนของนักเรียนที่เรียนโดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน และ 3) เพื่อสำรวจความคิดเห็นของผู้เรียนที่มีต่อการเรียนรู้โดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยนี้ ได้แก่ นักเรียนจำนวน 80 คนจากโรงเรียนแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดยะลา กลุ่มตัวอย่างได้แบ่งเป็น 2 กลุ่มคือ กลุ่มทดลอง และกลุ่มควบคุม กลุ่มละ 40 คน กลุ่มทดลองได้รับการสอนโดยใช้วิธีการสอนโดยใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน กลุ่มควบคุมได้รับการสอนโดยใช้วิธีการสอนโดยไม่ได้ใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน เครื่องมือวิจัยที่ใช้ ได้แก่ แผนการสอนที่แตกต่างกันสองชุด แบบทดสอบการเขียน ก่อน และหลังเรียน เกณฑ์การให้คะแนน แบบสอบถาม และแบบสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ข้อมูลวิจัยเชิงปริมาณได้รับการวิเคราะห์แบบค่าเฉลี่ยเลขคณิต และข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพได้รับการวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระ และอธิบายในรูปแบบบรรยาย ผลของการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลพบว่า หลังการทดลอง พบความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติระหว่างคะแนนเฉลี่ยของแบบทดสอบหลังเรียนของกลุ่มทดลอง ($\bar{x}$=13.55, SD=1.95) และกลุ่มควบคุม ($\bar{x}$=11.80, SD=1.40) และพบว่ามีค่าขนาดอิทธิพลขนาดใหญ่ (d=1.10) เมื่อพิจารณาพัฒนาการในการเขียนย่อหน้าแบบบรรยายของนักเรียน พบว่า ด้านที่นักเรียนมีพัฒนาการมากที่สุด คือ ด้านโครงสร้างของการเขียนย่อหน้า (t=7.808, p=.01) และด้านที่นักเรียนมีพัฒนาการน้อยที่สุด คือ ด้านเอกภาพของย่อหน้า (t=4.210, p=.01) นักเรียนในกลุ่มทดลองมีพัฒนาการที่ดีกว่ากลุ่มควบคุม อาจเป็นเพราะปัจจัยส่งเสริม 3 ประการ ได้แก่ การทำงานเป็นกลุ่ม ความช่วยเหลือของผู้สอน และความเกี่ยวข้องของปัญหา อย่างไรก็ตามพบว่าปัจจัยที่เป็นอุปสรรค

ได้แก่ความสับสนของกระบวนการสอนโดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน และบทบาทของนักเรียนและผู้สอน ภาษาที่ผู้สอนใช้ในการสอน ทักษะที่อ่อนด้อยทางด้านภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียน และความยากของปัญหา นอกจากนี้ ยังพบว่านักเรียนมีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อการเรียนโดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน ($\bar{x}$=3.45) เนื่องจากการเรียนวิธีนี้ช่วยพัฒนาความสามารถในการเขียน รวมถึงทักษะด้านการสื่อสารและการเรียนรู้แบบร่วมมือ ผลของการวิจัยสรุปได้ว่าการเรียนรู้โดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐานสามารถนำมาใช้ในการสอนเพื่อการพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนของนักเรียนในระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลายได้โดยต้องพิจารณาปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องอย่างรอบคอบ

Thesis Title	The Effects of Problem-Based Learning on Improving Matthayomsuksa 6 Students' English Descriptive Paragraph Writing
Author	Mr. Abadee Cheadae
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ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were threefold: 1) to compare the effects of two teaching methods: problem-based learning (PBL) teaching method and non-PBL teaching method on improving Matthayomsuksa 6 students' English descriptive paragraph writing ability, 2) to investigate factors affecting their learning through PBL approach and 3) to explore students' perceptions toward learning through PBL approach. The participants of this study were eighty students at a school in Yala, southern Thailand. They were divided into two groups of 40 participants. The experimental group receiving PBL approach and the controlled group receiving non-PBL teaching approach. The research instruments included two sets of lesson plans, identical pre and post writing tests, scoring rubrics, questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed for the arithmetic means and qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis and presented in a descriptive way. The findings show that after the treatment, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of posttest of the experimental group ($\bar{x}$=13.55, SD=1.95) and that of the controlled group ($\bar{x}$=11.80, SD=1.40). The effect size was discovered with a large practical significance (*d*=1.10). Considering aspects of descriptive paragraph writing, structure of a paragraph was found as the most developed aspect (t=7.808, p=.01) and paragraph unity was found to be the lowest developed (t=4.210, p=.01). The students in the experimental group outperformed the controlled group possibly because of three supporting factors: working with others in group, help of a teacher and the relevancy of the problem provided by the teacher. However, obstructing factors found included confusion of PBL process and roles of the students and the teacher, medium of instruction, students' deficiency of English and difficulty of the problem. In addition,

students have positive perceptions toward learning in PBL approach ($\overline{x}$=3.45) as it was not only helpful for developing their writing ability but also communicative and cooperative learning skills. The findings of this study suggest that PBL can be implemented to develop English writing in EFL high school students with careful considerations of involving factors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cheadae, A. & Khongpot, S. (2018a). The Effects of Problem-Based Learning on Improving High School Students' English Writing Ability: *Proceedings of The 7ᵗʰ PSU Education Conference. Higher Education for All: Surviving in Times of Change*,13-14 December, 2018. Conference Hall, Prince of Songkla University, Hatyai, 79-86.

Cheadae, A. & Khongput, S. (2018b). *Thai EFL Students' Perceptions toward Learning English Descriptive Paragraph Writing through Problem-Based Learning*. Paper submitted to Veridian E-Journal, Silpakorn University.

LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

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ชื่อเรื่อง: The effects of problem-based learning on improving high school students' English writing ability

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English has been recognized as one of the most important languages in the world as it is a major means of communication in various fields of professions. Therefore, it becomes one of the most studied languages in the world (Dearden, 2014). In Thailand, English has been taughtas a major foreign language at many different levels of education all over the country (Wiriyachitra, 2002). However, despite many years of studying English, students' performance in international standardized tests was found to be very concerning and dropping compared to those in other ASEAN countries. Though average TOEFL scores of Thai students were reported as higher than those of Laotian students, they were still lower than those of students in other ASEAN countries (Kamkhien, 2010). In addition, evidence from Education First's 2018 English Proficiency Index Report showed that Thailand ranked 46th out of 88 countries rated, dropping into the "Low Proficiency" group.

Among the four main language skills, writing is a productive skill that ESL and EFL students have to learn in order to develop ability in linguistic knowledge (Huy, 2015). It is used in education, communication and research as well as evaluation for students' academic achievement and other purposes (Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015). It can also help learners improve their ability in using grammar and vocabulary and communicate with other people in many aspects (Caroll, 1990).

Due to its complexity, English writing skill is considered one of the most difficult skills not only for L2 learners but also for L1 learners (Al-Gharabally, 2015; Na Phuket, 2015; Tillema, 2012). A writer is required to have syntactic, semantic, rhetorical, and discourse knowledge in order to produce a well-constructed text which can help a reader understand the meaning clearly (Makalela, 2004; Nunan, 1990; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013).

Students are required to learn and be taught how to produce effective paragraph writing (Hussen, 2015). A paragraph is the combination of a group of sentences on one topic or main idea. Writing a paragraph requires a sense of organization in which ideas and sentences are organized clearly and coherently. To write a paragraph coherently, a writer should construct sentences that are related to each other in terms of content and grammatical structure. He or she should also make them flow with a smooth transition.

From these requirements, constructing a paragraph is not a straight forward task, and it can cause difficulty for writers.

In EFL classroom, many researchers agree that students have problems in writing paragraphs. Lack of adequate language proficiency and lack of knowledge about differences in vocabulary and structures between the target language and their first language are the main factors affecting the students' ability in writing English paragraph (Benchachinda, 2012; Bootchuy, 2008; Jenwitheesuk, 2009; Nonkukhetkhong, 2013; Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). Also, lack of coherence is seen as another important problem of writing since it is a logical bridge between words, sentences and paragraphs. The meaning of a paragraph can be hard to understand if it lacks coherence (Kies, 1995).

Apart from the problems based on students' knowledge, another factor affecting students' poor writing could be the teaching methods used by teachers (Alami, 2016). In class, teachers mostly play a leading role of giving knowledge. This method seems to be one-way learning process in which students are passive and rely more on teachers. The traditional teaching method, grammar translation, is now considered a method that cannot improve communicative ability (Horst, 2003). Thus, teachers should consider a more effective method that encourages students to be more active through class activities in which students play an important role in the learning and the teacher plays the role of a facilitator to guide students (Baybourdiani, Zohrabi & Torabi, 2012). Thus, if the learning activity provided by the teacher is appropriate for the students, it helps them to increase motivation to learn things and create new thoughts. Meaningful knowledge is constructed by students themselves, meaning that they can construct their own knowledge rather than gain it from their instructors (Flynn, Mesibov, Vermette & Smith, 2004; Foote, Vermette & Battaglia, 2001; Forman, Minick & Stone, 1993; Reid & Stone, 1991; Swanson, 1991; Wong, 1993).

One teaching method that teachers can use to promote active learning in class is problem-based learning (PBL). PBL is a student-centered learning approach based on sociocultural learning theory, which believes that students will learn well when they work together in a small group and constructivism learning theories, which believe that students can construct the new knowledge by themselves with the support from the expert. In PBL classroom, students are assigned to work cooperatively in a small group

of 4-5 students to discuss different ideas and share feasible and best solutions to problems within the group. The members in the group have chances to find different information and share language skills that can make them acquire an in-depth understanding of the problem. Interaction and communication through listening, speaking and writing with others in the group happen, and students' ideas can be developed (Antepohl & Herzig, 1999). PBL approach also emphasizes self and peer assessment. Students are required to evaluate their own and others' works and encouraged to communicate with others (Patrick & McPhee, 2014). The teamwork is successful as the progress of every student in the group is monitored (Keeling, 2008). This practice can increase trust among group members and between the students and the teacher (Page, Thorsteinsson & Niculescu, 2009).

In employing PBL, the teacher has to understand the characteristics of PBL and the roles of the teacher and the students in a writing class in order to obtain effective outcomes (Tan, 2003).

The roles of a teacher and students in PBL classroom are different from traditional teaching method. In PBL classroom, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator to guide students to complete a set goal that students need to perform tasks by themselves. The teacher generates and presents a problem to the students, observes, gives support and feedback, and evaluates their products in the working process in order to help them complete the task. In addition, the teacher provides comfortable and motivating learning environment to encourage students to formulate their knowledge independently and develop teamwork (Tick, 2007).

In PBL classroom, the problems are the heart of this teaching approach and are used as a stimulus for learning (Sojisirikul, 2009). The teacher should provide students with a problem that is up-to-date, relevant, authentic and upon students' interests (Datsgeer & Afzal, 2015). There are two types of problems used in PBL. The first type is an ill-structured problem which refers to a problem that is confusing or conflicting. The information is not adequate in order to let the students clarify, justify or integrate their background knowledge to the new knowledge. The second type is a well-structured problem which refers to a problem, the answer to which is already provided. There will be the right answer and the problem is not complex. The students will learn whether the answer is right or wrong (Barrows & Wee, 2007).

From these two types of problems, the ill-structured problem is likely to be more suitable for language skill development because it is ambiguous, complex and incomplete which makes it more challenging for students to generate, practice and develop ideas to solve it (Graaff & Kolmos, 2003). When the problem is complex, it promotes students high order thinking skill, independent learning and communicative skill (Barell, 2007).

PBL has been employed in many disciplines including language education in both ESL and EFL contexts. Many previous studies have adoptedit as a tool for developing students' English skills, such as reading, speaking and writing and the outcomes were satisfactory (Astawa, Artini & Nitiasih, 2017; Gijbels, Dochy, Segers, & Van Den Bossche, 2005).

However, when conducting PBL, the teachers need to take into account some negative factors that might occur and lead to the negative outcomes. PBL approach might be very difficult for the students, especially for those who have never experienced PBL before. Training on how to be dependent on themselves to discover new knowledge should be provided by the teacher. Therefore, the teacher should facilitate them to learn from the very beginning to the end of the course (Mansor, Abdullah, Wahab, Rasul, Mohamed, Mohd Nor & Raof, 2014).

In relation to the writing skill, PBL is found to be frequently employed at a higher educational level (Sojisirikul, 2009). A limited number of studies focused on a lower level of education (Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015; Othman & Shah, 2013) possibly because students are considered having adequate proficiency of English.

As writing in English is one important language skill in the 21st century, students have to express themselves in English writing to build relationships with foreigners and people all around the world. One of the substantial writing types which students are required to write is descriptive writing that can be used to describe objects, events and experiences for the readers to understand clearly (Namasivayam, Singh, Mostafa, Janoory & Abdullah, 2017). Thus, teaching and learning how to write descriptive paragraph is important.

In writing a descriptive paragraph, writers are required to write a good description of a place, a person or an object that they want to describe (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). To write a descriptive paragraph, writers are required to construct

meaningful structured units made up of a number of sentences describing the matter through the topic sentence showing the main idea, supporting sentences demonstrating detail information about the matter and the concluding sentence that usually restates the main idea (Rojas, 2012).

Hence, this study aimed to investigate the effects of PBL on improving students' ability in writing a descriptive paragraph as they participated in PBL activities. The researcher also attempted to investigate the factors affecting students' ability in writing descriptive paragraphs and their perceptions toward learning writing through PBL approach.

2. Definitions of terms

Problem-based learning (PBL) refers to a student-centered pedagogy in which students learn about the subject through the experience of solving an open-ended problem a learning approach where learning takes place in a small group of 4-5. Students are given a problem to solve and the problems are relevant, authentic and related to students' interest. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator to help students while they solve a real-life problem. This learning approach encourages students to work cooperatively and motivate self- directed and learning processes (Schmidt,1983).

Non-PBL is a teacher-centered pedagogy in which students individually learn without a problem and are taught by the teacher deductively. The teacher plays an important role of giving knowledge and students are passive and their learning rely more on the teacher.

3. Research questions

The research questions are as follows:

3.1 Are there any differences between the effects of problem-based learning classroom and non-problem-based learning classroom on Mathayomsuksa 6 students' English descriptive paragraph writing ability? If so, how?

3.2 What are the factors affecting Mathayomsuksa 6 students learning descriptive paragraph writing through PBL approach?

3.3 What are Mathayomsuksa 6 students' perceptions towards learning English Paragraph writing in problem-based learning approach?

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research design

This research was a quasi-experimental study including one experimental group and one controlled group. The experimental group was assigned into theproblem-based learning group of 40 participants and the controlled group was assigned into a non-PBL teaching group of 40 participants. Both groups were asked to complete the identical pre-test and post-test. The experimental group went through the PBL activities, while the controlled group went through non-PBL teaching activities to write one descriptive paragraph to examine their English paragraph writing ability. Then the PBL group was asked to answer the questionnaire and be interviewed. The research design can be summarized in the following figure:
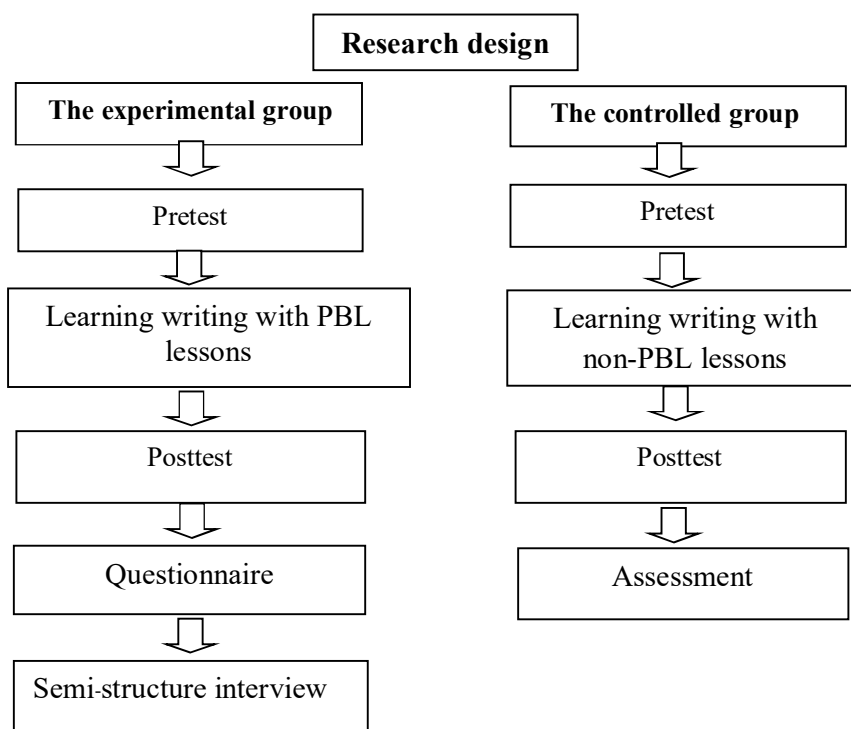
Figure 1 Research design

4.2 Participants

The participants of the current study were 80 Mattayomsuksa 6 students in the second semester of academic year 2017 at Thamvitya Mulnity School in Yala province. Students in two intact groups were selected as participants in this study. One group was assigned into an experimental group, titled a PBL group and the other was assigned into a controlled group or traditional learning group. The participants' English proficiency level was low intermediate, determined by their achievement test results of the second semester in academic year 2016.

4.3 Research instruments

In this study, the researcher employed three research instruments to assist the conduct of PBL class.

4.3.1 Teaching and learning problem

The key problem that students were asked to solve was to write a good English descriptive paragraph. They were allowed to write a descriptive paragraph of any topic with 100-120 words (see Appendix A).

4.3.2 Teaching materials

The experimental and the controlled groups were taught using different sets of lesson plans: PBL lesson plan (see Appendix B) and non-PBL lesson plan (see Appendix C). Both sets of the lesson plans shared the same topics which included parts of a paragraph, transitional words, descriptive writing, paragraph unity and descriptive sentence structure. The PBL lesson plans were designed based on five steps of the teaching process in PBL including 1) Introduction of PBL 2) Presentation of problem 3) Peer teaching 4) Presentation of writing and 5) Evaluation of progress. In contrast, the traditional lesson plans were designed to be taught deductively by the teacher in a traditional pattern; that is, the teacher explained characteristics of descriptive paragraph writing. Then the participants were asked to produce one writing task individually. The learning sources used in both groups including handouts (see Appendix D) and worksheets (see Appendix E) provided by the researcher.

4.3.3 Scoring rubrics

The scoring rubrics used to evaluate the quality of students' pretest and posttest were invented by the researcher (see Appendix F). Five aspects of descriptive paragraph writing, namely, parts of a paragraph, transition words, descriptive writing, paragraph unity and sentence structure of descriptive language were evaluated using these scoring rubrics.

4.4 Data collection instruments

4.4.1 Pre and post writing tests

The pre and post writing tests were identical. The topic was *"My favorite English classroom environment."* The participants in both groups were asked to write individually in 80 minutes in order to measure their writing performance before and after receiving the treatment (see Appendix G).

4.4.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire adapted from Sojisirikul's (2009) study was used to investigate students' perceptions toward problem-based learning approach after they learned through PBL approach. It consists of two parts. The first part consists of 20 statements divided into four domains, asking about students' perceptions toward knowledge gained and writing improvement, effectiveness of PBL units, self-study and working in groups. The questionnaire was presented in a form of five Likert scale ranging from 5 "Strongly Agree", 4 "Agree", 3 "Neutral", 2 "Disagree" to 1 "Strongly Disagree". The questionnaire distributed to students was presented in Thai in order to gain the participants' in-depth understanding of the questions. The second part was provided for students to give suggestions and comments in open-ended questions (see Appendix H).

4.4.3 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview was used to collect qualitative data about the factors affecting students' learning and students' in-depth understanding in implementation of PBL in learning English writing. The interview included six open-ended questions

asking about the factors they found while participating in PBL classroom. Twenty participants interviewed were randomly selected from the experimental group. The interview was conducted by the researcher and a co-teacher, and in students' native language to ensure students' understanding of the questions (see Appendix I)

4.5 Data collection procedure

The overall research procedure included three phases: 1) pre-treatment process, 2) treatment process, and 3) post-treatment process.

4.5.1 Pre-treatment process

At the first stage of the study, students in both groups were assigned to complete pre-test on English descriptive paragraph writing individually in order to ensure that there was no significant difference between both groups before the treatment.

4.5.2 Treatment process

4.5.2.1 Treatment process for the experimental group

The treatment for PBL participants followed these teaching steps. (1) Teacher introduced the PBL approach to the students before dividing them into groups. Then, the teacher informed the roles of a teacher and students. (2) The teacher presented the teaching and learning problem about descriptive paragraph writing. The students brainstormed, discovered and identified their known and unknown points of the problem within the group. (3) The teacher distributed the handouts. The students gave peer teaching; gathered information and shared knowledge about paragraph writing and descriptive paragraph writing, paragraph structure, paragraph unity and sentence structures of descriptive paragraph and did the corresponding exercises. (4) The students wrote the first draft of their group writing of a 100 to 120 words based on their own topic. (5) The students provided peer assessment by assessing a descriptive paragraph written by other groups using the rubric provided by the teacher. (6) The students revised and refined their writing after their works were given feedback by other groups. (7) The students completed the final draft. (8) The teacher clarified learning gaps that the students did not understand including topic sentence, supporting sentence, concluding sentence, coherence, cohesion, unity and grammar. (9) Students evaluated

their own tasks according to the rubric that they have used in the peer assessment session.

4.5.2.2 **Treatment process for the controlled group**

The treatment process for participants in the traditional learning group was the following. (1) The teacher explained to the students the purpose of studying paragraph writing and descriptive paragraph writing in particular. (2) The teacher taught the students the paragraph structure, different types of paragraph writing and the definition and characteristics of paragraph writing. Then, the teacher introduced the features of a descriptive paragraph in the following sequence: the structure, word choice, transitional devices and paragraph unity. (3) The students wrote the first draft of 100-120 words of a descriptive paragraph individually based on the topic given by the teacher. (4) The students revised and refined their writing. They shared their paragraph writing to classmates. (5) The teacher gave feedback and students wrote the second draft. (6) The students revised and wrote the final draft and submittedit to the teacher. (7) The teacher clarified any gapsfound in their writing including topic sentence, supporting sentence, concluding sentence, coherence, cohesion, unity and grammar accuracy. (8) The teacher distributed the results and gave feedback.

4.5.2.3   **Post-treatment process**

After the students completed the cycle of teaching and learning, they were assigned to compose the post writing test individually. Then, the questionnaire was distributed to all participants in the experimental group to gather their perceptions toward learning writing English paragraph through PBL approach. The interviews were conducted in order to investigate the factors affecting students' learning and students' in-depth understanding toward implementation of PBL in learning English writing.

The data collection procedures can be summarized below.

Table 1 Summary of data collection procedure

Meeting	PBL group	Non-PBL group	Time. (40 Minutes /period)
1	**Pre-treatment process** - Pre-writing test	**Pre-treatment process** -Pre-writing test	2 periods
2	**Treatment process** **Lesson 1** **-** Introduction of PBL **-** Instruction of roles of teacher and students in PBL class - Organizing students into groups	**Treatment process** **Lesson 1** **Handouts 1,4; Worksheet 2** - Explanation of the purpose of paragraph writing	2 periods
3	**Lesson 2** **Worksheet 1** -Presentation of the problem -Students identified known and unknown points of the problem. -Students brainstormed, discovered and shared knowledge in groups.	**Lesson 2** **Handouts 5,7,9; Worksheet 3** -Teaching of descriptive writing and the different types of paragraph writing, paragraph structure.	2 periods
4	**Lesson 3** **Handouts 1-12; Worksheets 2-3** -Teacher distributed the handouts about paragraph and descriptive paragraph writing and paragraph structure. -Students gave peer teaching, gathered information and shared knowledge.	**Lesson 3** **Handouts 14,15; Worksheet 4** -Teaching of transitional words	2 periods
5	**Lesson 3** **Handouts 13-24; Worksheets 4-6** -Teacher distributed the handouts about transitional words, paragraph unity and sentence structures of descriptive paragraph. -Students gave peer teaching, gathered and shared information	**Lesson 3** **Handouts 18,20; Worksheet 5** -Teaching of paragraph unity.	2 periods

Meeting	PBL group	Non-PBL group	Time. (40 Minutes /period)
6	**Lesson 4** **Worksheet 7** - Students wrote the first draft of 100 to 120 words of a descriptive paragraph in groups.	**Lesson 3** **Handouts 22,24; Worksheet 6** -Teaching of sentence structure of descriptive writing.	2 periods
7	**Lesson 4** **Peer evaluation rubrics** - Students provided other groups' peer assessment.	**Lesson 4** **Worksheet 7** - Students wrote the first draft of 100-120 words of a descriptive paragraph individually	2 periods
8	**Lesson 4** **Worksheet 7** - Students wrote the second draft.	**Lesson 4** **Worksheet 7** -Students revised and refined the first draft. -Students shared paragraph writing to classmates.	2 periods
9	**Lesson 4** **Worksheet 7** - Students revised and refined the second draft.	**Lesson 4** **Worksheet 7** -Students got feedback from teacher. -Students wrote the second draft.	2 periods
10	**Lesson 4** **Worksheet 7** - Students completed the final draft.	**Lesson 4** **Worksheet 7** - Students revised and completed the final draft -Students submitted to teacher.	2 periods
11	**Lesson 4** - Teacher clarified any gaps about writing descriptive paragraph.	**Lesson 4** - Teacher clarified any gaps about writing descriptive paragraph.	2 periods
12	**Lesson 5** - Students evaluated their own writing tasks. **Self-evaluation rubrics**	**Lesson 5** - Teacher distributed the results and gave feedbacks.	2 periods
13-14	**Post-treatment process** -Post writing test -Questionnaire -Interview	**Post-treatment process** -Post writing test -Class discussion about writing in class	4 periods

4.6   **Data Analysis**

To answer all research questions, the data obtained from the pretest and posttest, questionnaire and semi-structured interview were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

4.6.1 **Writing tests**

The pretest and posttest of both groups were evaluated by two raters including the researcher and a teacher who received a Master's degree in TESOL and has seven- year teaching experienceto ensure scoring reliability using the rubric designed by the researcher. Paired sample t-test was employed to see the significant difference of the scores for both groups and effect size was then sought. The reliability in scoring the writing tests of both raters were computed using Pearson's Correlation and reached 0.869 for the pretest and 0.894 for the posttest.

4.6.2 **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire offered both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were computed for the arithmetic means and interpreted through descriptive analysis. The qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes were grouped and presented in a descriptive way according to main domains: knowledge gained, effectiveness of the PBL unit, self-study and working in groups. The mean scores of all statements were interpreted based on Sojisirikul (2009); that is, the mean scores of students' perceptions were divided into three levels: negative, positive and very positive, and the classification criteria were taken from a range of scores (one to five) divided by the number of levels created. The value calculated was 1.33, which was added to each mean score, making a range of 1.00-2.33, showing students' negative perceptions toward PBL, 2.34-3.67 representing students' positive perceptions, and 3.68-5.00, illustrating students' very positive perceptions.

4.6.3 **Semi-structured interview**

The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using content analysis. Themes were grouped according to similar perceptions and presented in a descriptive way.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Effects of problem-based learning in developing descriptive writing ability

The results revealed the differences between the pretest and posttest scores of the participants in both groups as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Comparison of test scores between PBL and non-PBL group

	Group		Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	p-value	Cohen's d
Pretest	Experimental	(n=40)	10.13	1.38	.420	78	.675	
	Controlled	(n=40)	10.25	1.28				
Posttest	Experimental	(n=40)	13.58	1.95	4.615	70.80	.000*	1.10
	Controlled	(n=40)	11.80	1.40				

*significant at 0.01 level

The results in Table 2 show that there was no significant difference between the experimental group and the controlled group before the experiment (t=.420, p=.675). In other words, the two groups were not significantly different in writing a descriptive paragraph at the beginning of the experiment.

After the experiment, the results reveal that the mean scores of the experimental group (M=13.55, SD=1.95) was higher than those of the controlled group (M=11.80, SD=1.40). A significant difference between the two groups was found (t=4.615, p=.00). Further, the effect size value indicates very large practical significance (d=1.10).

When considering the individual aspect of descriptive writing of PBL groups' pre and posttest scores as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Comparison of PBL group's pretest and posttest mean scores of writing aspects

Writing aspects	Pretest Mean	S.D.	Posttest Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	p-value
Paragraph structure	1.73	.640	2.85	.662	7.809	39	.01*
Descriptive writing	2.03	.423	2.65	.483	7.319	39	.01*
Sentence structure	1.95	.389	2.50	.506	6.904	39	.01*
Transition words	2.10	.441	2.75	.707	5.589	39	.01*
Paragraph unity	2.33	.526	2.83	.636	4.210	39	.01*
Overall Performance	10.13	1.381	13.58	1.973	11.865	39	.01*

*significant at 0.01 level

The results in Table 3 shows that the overall performance of all aspects of descriptive paragraph writing ability of the participants in PBL group developed after the experiment (t=11.865, p=.01). Among the five writing aspects investigated, structure of a paragraph wasfound most significantly developed (t=7.809, p=.01). The aspect of paragraph unity was found least developed (t=4.210, p=.01).

When considering the individual aspect of descriptive writing of both experimental and controlled groups' posttest scores as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Comparison of posttest mean scores of writing aspects of the experimental and the controlled group

Writing aspects	PBL		Non-PBL		t-value		df	p-value	Cohen's d
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.					
Paragraph structure	2.85	.662	2.68	0.53	1.309	**	78	.19	0.30
Descriptive writing	2.65	.483	2.25	0.44	3.878	**	78	.00	0.88
Sentence structure	2.50	.506	2.18	0.38	3.232	**	78	.00	0.73
Transition words	2.75	.707	2.18	0.45	4.349	**	78	.00	0.98
Paragraph unity	2.83	.636	2.55	0.50	2.144	**	78	.04	0.49
Total	13.58	1.973	11.80	1.40	4.641	**	78	.00	1.05

* significant at 0.01 level

The results in Table 4 shows that the overall performance of the PBL group's writing aspects in the posttest was higher than that of the controlled group (t=4.641, p=.00). Among the five aspects investigated, the aspect of transition words was found

most significantly different (*t*=4.349, *p*=.00). The aspect of paragraph structure was found least significantly different (*t*=1.309, *p*=.19).

5.2 **Factors affecting students' learning descriptive paragraph writing through PBL approach**

The collected data from questionnaire and semi-structured interview revealed the factors affecting students' learning through PBL approach in Table 5.

Table 5 Factors affecting students' learning through PBL

No.	Categories	Aspects	Statement
1.	Supporting factors	Working in group	I think I could learn better in a group because I could share and learn from others. (Respondent 2, interview)
		Help of a teacher	Personally, I think the help of the teacher made it easy to understand the learning contents. (Respondent 19, interview)
		Relevancy of the problem	I agree that I could have learned better because of the problem provided by the teacher was relevant and challenging for me. (Respondent 4, questionnaire)
2.	Obstructing factors	Confusion of PBL process	I think I was confused about the role of the members in the group and the teacher's role. I did not know when to work by myself and when I can ask for help from the teacher. (Respondent 3, interview)
		Medium of instruction	I found that the it was very difficult for me to understand the teacher's explanation, although I have tried but I could still not understand it well. (Respondent 2, questionnaire)
		Language deficiency	It was so hard for me to discuss in English with others in the group. I could not do it well because I accept that my English is very poor. (Respondent 6, questionnaire)
		Difficulty of the problem	I feel like the problem given by the teacher was too difficult for Matthayomsuksa 6 students because I have never studied writing like this before. I could have learned better if the problem was easier than this. (Respondent 12, interview)

The results in Table 5 reveal a number of factors supporting and obstructing students' learning in problem-based learning approach. For the supporting factors, the participants viewed that they could learn well when learning with friends. Another supporting factor was teacher's help. The participants pointed out that the teacher could help them understand the contents. They also commented that the problem given by the teacher was relevant to them and could help them learn better.

For the obstructing factors, the participants viewed that they were confused about their roles and the teacher's role and about the process of PBL. Also, they viewed that they did not understand what the teacher explained in English very well. They also claimed that they had problems with English discussion in groups and some misunderstanding always happened. The last obstructing factor was difficulty of the problem. The participants agreed that the problem given by the teacher was too difficult for them because they never learned through this method before.

5.3 **Students' perceptions towards learning English paragraph writing using problem-based learning approach**

The collected data from the questionnaire revealed the students' perceptions in Table 6.

Table 6 Students' overall perceptions on learning through the problem-based learning approach

Statements	x	S.D.	Interpretation
Knowledge gained and writing improvement	3.54	0.69	Positive
Effectiveness of the PBL unit	3.47	0.69	Positive
Self-study	3.40	0.67	Positive
Working in groups	3.40	0.70	Positive
Average	**3.45**	**0.68**	**Positive**

The results in Table 6 showed that overall the participants had positive perceptions toward problem-based learning approach ($\bar{x}$=3.45). When considering each domain, the results revealed that the most highly rated domain was knowledge gained and writing improvement ($\bar{x}$=3.54) and the lowest rated domains were self-study and working in group ($\bar{x}$=3.40).

According to individual items in the questionnaire, the results are provided in detail in following Tables 7-10.

Table 7 Students' perceptions toward knowledge gained and writing improvement

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	Interpretation
1. I have developed paragraph writing skill.	0	14	20	6	0	2.80	Positive
2. I have developed descriptive paragraph writing skill.	0	10	19	10	1	3.05	Positive
3. I have acquired new knowledge from class discussion.	0	0	10	22	8	3.95	Very positive
4. I have gained various kinds of knowledge about writing such as word choice, sentence structure, and so on.	0	7	19	12	2	3.23	Positive
5. I have developed thinking skills, such as thinking reasonably and systematically.	0	1	13	21	5	3.75	Very positive
6. I have developed self-directed learning skill.	0	0	17	19	4	3.68	Very positive
7. I have developed cooperative learning skill.	0	0	3	22	15	4.30	Very positive
Average						**3.54**	**Positive**

The results in Table 7 show that overall the participants well perceived that they gained knowledge and improved their writing ($\bar{x}$=3.54). When considering each statement, it was found that they perceived developing cooperative learning skill as the

highest rank (No.7, $\overline{x}$=4.30), followed by their acquisition of new knowledge from class discussion (No.3, $\overline{x}$=3.95) and the development of thinking skills (No.5, $\overline{x}$=3.75). Interestingly, they viewed the development of paragraph writing skill as the lowest rank (No.1, $\overline{x}$=2.80).

In qualitative responses from semi-structured interview data, the participants also mentioned that they gained various kinds of knowledge from learning through PBL. They perceived that PBL was not only helpful for developing their writing skills but also useful forimproving their communicative skill and cooperative learning skill, as stated in the following comments:

> I think I could not only improve my writing skill but also communicative skill. I had a chance to communicate with my friends because the teacher encouraged everyone to discuss in English all the time. (Respondent 14, interview)

> I think I have developed cooperative learning skill. Before learning through PBL, I was not confident to work with others. After participating in the PBL class, I changed my mind and I could work in group better than before. (Respondent 8, interview)

Regarding the effectiveness of the PBL unit, the data obtained from the questionnaire showed the students' perceptions in Table 8.

Table 8 Students' perceptions toward effectiveness of the PBL unit

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	$\overline{x}$	Interpretation
1. Numbers of materials provided by teacher, such as handouts and worksheets were adequate.	0	0	8	22	10	4.30	Very positive
2. The number of problems were appropriate.	0	1	10	23	6	3.85	Very positive
3. The numbers of handouts were reasonable.	0	3	20	15	2	3.40	Positive
4. Teaching and learning steps were arranged systematically.	0	4	26	9	1	3.18	Positive
5. The evaluation was appropriate.	0	2	19	16	3	3.50	Positive
6. Time spent for PBL was sufficient.	0	13	21	5	1	2.85	Positive
Average						**3.47**	**Positive**

The results in Table 8 show that overall the participants perceived that the PBL unit was effective to their learning ($\bar{x}$=3.47). Taking each statement into account, it was found that they had a very positive perception toward adequacy of numbers of learning materials provided by the teacher such as handouts and worksheets (No.1, $\bar{x}$=4.30). They also viewed that the numbers of problems were appropriate (No.2, $\bar{x}$=3.85) and the evaluation was appropriate (No.5, $\bar{x}$=3.50). Despite a positive perception about sufficient time spent for PBL activities, the participants perceived it as the lowest rank (No.6, $\bar{x}$=2.85).

The qualitative data from semi-structured interview revealed that most participants confirmed their positive perceptions about the adequate number of materials provided by the teacher, as stated in the following comments:

> The handouts included everything I wanted to use in writing a descriptive paragraph. I didn't need to search elsewhere. (Respondent 4, interview)

However, it was also found that time allocation and the problem given were seen as problematic. The participants commented that time and problem were not appropriate for their proficiency, as stated in the following remarks:

> I think time given by the teacher was not enough, especially when composing writing. (Respondent 9, interview)

> I think the problem was too difficult for me because I had never learned writing like this before and writing skill is very difficult for me. (Respondent 10, interview)

In terms of the ability to self-study, the participants' views from the questionnaire are shown in Table 9.

Table 9 Students' perceptions toward self-study

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	Interpretation
1. I could select reading materials by myself.	0	0	6	20	14	4.20	Very positive
2. I could solve any difficulties by myself.	0	7	25	8	0	3.03	Positive
3. I needed the teacher's help.	0	10	9	10	11	2.98	Positive
Average						**3.40**	**Positive**

The results in Table 9 show that overall the participants indicated that they were able to study by themselves ($\overline{x}$=3.40). When considering each statement, it was found that they perceived selecting reading materials by themselves as the highest rank (No.1, $\overline{x}$=4.20) followed by solving difficulties by themselves (No.2, $\overline{x}$= 3.03). The lowest rank of participants perception found was their need of the teacher's help (No.3, $\overline{x}$=2.98).

In qualitative responses from semi-structured interview, the participants are likely to have mixed perceptions. On the one hand, most of the participants mentioned that the materials provided by the teacher were convenient for them as they were able to select any materials to read, as affirmed in the following comment:

> In my opinion, the handouts were very useful and helpful. It was very convenient for me that everything was there. I did not have to find any other places because they were enough. (Respondent 13, interview)

On the other hand, some participants viewed that the materials were too difficult for them, as mentioned in the following comment:

> The handouts were too difficult to understand, the teacher should select easier handouts for students. (Respondent 18, interview)

> Even though I was able to select the easiest ones to read but I found that most materials were too difficult. (Respondent 16, interview)

In relation to collaboration in group, the data obtained from the questionnaire revealed students' perceptions shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Students' perceptions toward working in group

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	Interpretation
1. I could work well with others.	0	1	13	22	4	3.73	Very positive
2. I have been open to others' opinions.	0	0	13	17	10	3.93	Very positive
3. Different English proficiency of group members affected my learning.	0	7	19	14	0	2.83	Positive
4. I could work in group better than work individually.	0	1	20	16	3	3.53	Positive
Average						**3.40**	**Positive**

The results in Table 10 show that the participants generally had a positive perception towards working in group ($\bar{x}$=3.40). When considering each statement, it was revealed that they had been open to others' opinions (No.2, $\bar{x}$=3.93). They also viewed that they could work well with others (No.1, $\bar{x}$=3.73) and work better in group than working individually (No.4, $\bar{x}$=3.53).

The qualitative data from the questionnaire also support this aspect. Some participants pointed out that they could learn better when working in groups as they were able to share and exchange their knowledge with their peers, as stated in the following comment:

> I like to learn in the group to share the knowledge and discuss with my friends. I can also teach my friend and my friends can teach me something that I didn't know before. I think I could learn better than learning alone. (Respondent 15, questionnaire)

Though the participants preferred to learn in groups, some students viewed that the differences of English proficiency of group members could affect their learning, as stated in the following comment:

I think I like to work in group in PBL approach if the students' English proficiency is not too different because some students' English is very poor and they did not help our group at all. I understand that they would help but they did not know how to help, so I think my group would have worked better if the group members' English proficiency was not too different. (Respondent 9, questionnaire)

5.4 Summary of the findings

5.4 1 Effects of PBL on students' writing ability

From the findings, it can be concluded that the writing ability of both PBL and non-PBL groups improved significantly after the treatment. However, PBL groups outperformed the traditional group with a large practical significance (d=1.10). When considering the aspects of writing, the students in PBL group were found to mostly develop parts of a paragraph (t=7.808, p=.01) and the aspect of paragraph unity was found least developed (t=4.210, p=.01).

5.4.2 Factors affecting students' learning through PBL approach

The findings revealed a number of supporting and obstructing factors students' learning through PBL approach. The supporting factors found were working with others, teacher's help and relevancy of the problem. The obstructing factors found were confusion of the problem, medium of instruction, language deficiency of students and difficulty of the teacher-generated problem.

5.4.3 Students' perceptions toward learning through PBL approach

The results showed that overall the participants had good perceptions toward learning descriptive paragraph writing through PBL approach ($\bar{x}$=3.45). When considering each domain, the results revealed that the most highly rated domain was knowledge gained and writing improvement ($\bar{x}$=3.54). The lowest rated domain were self-study and working in group ($\bar{x}$=3.40). The students perceived that PBL was not only helpful for developing their writing ability but also communicative and

cooperative learning skills since it offered them an opportunity to exchange their different knowledge with their peers through group discussion and focused tasks with facilitation of the teacher. However, some negative perceptions were discovered. Some students found that time allocated was not adequate to complete their writing task, and the problem and the handouts were too difficult for them as PBL was likely a new writing concept for them.

5.5 Discussion

The finding of this current study revealing PBL group outperforming traditional group suggests that PBL can be implemented to develop English descriptive writing ability of Thai EFL high school students who are considered low intermediate. The findings of this study are in accordance with the study of Sojisirikul(2009) and Dastgeer & Afzal, (2015) who found that problem-based learning is more effective than non-problem-based learning method for English learners.

A number of factors are likely to contribute to the PBL group's better performance. First, the participants in the PBL group were assigned to learn in small groups of 4-5 to discuss different ideas and share feasible and best solutions to problems within the group. They had chances to find different information and share language skills that can make them acquire in-depth understanding of the problem. In addition, interaction and communication with others in the group through listening and speaking while engaging in writing and other learning activities can develop students' ideas (Antepohl & Herzig, 1999). As supported by Aliffatul (2014), while students were dealing with a complex situation, their learning was expanded and this could increase their motivation in learning. They could give ideas or solutions to problems, listen to others and value different ideas. Furthermore, when students work in group, they are able to apply their own knowledge into their tasks, making more meaningful learning. Form a sociocultural perspective, students' learning is thought to happen and develop when they learn throughout their experiences, social interaction, negotiation and collaboration in the comfort area of learning where they are surrounded by their peers in a small group (Amerian, Ahmadian & Mehri, 2014).

The second factor contributing to students' writing improvement could be the facilitation provided by the teacher in all process of learning. In class, the teacher played

the role of a facilitator who set tasks up, served as a model problem solver, provided support by giving examples and asking questions to ensure that the students understood the content. Although students worked on tasks independently, the teacher still had overall control and the power to stop everything if necessary. This factor can be explained by constructivism learning theory believing that students' learning could occur when they learn in the comfort area of learning where the support is provided by the expert or a teacher to fulfill and complete their set goals (Duffy, Lowyck & Jonassen, 1993; Mvududu & Burgess, 2012). A facilitating role of a teacher is essential to PBL approach as suggested by Gwee (2008), and Othman and Shah (2013) that a teacher should know his or her role of being a facilitator in PBL class and comprehend the process of PBL clearly to succeed in adopting PBL in an EFL context.

The learning problem provided by the teacher could be another contributing factor. The learning problem distributed in this study was ill-structured, relevant and likely to be interesting to students' learning as suggested by Alajmi (2014) and Gwee (2008). It possibly made the students work harder and became more motivated to learn through identifying known and unknown points of the problem in groups and shared their background knowledge with their peers. The learning problem with interesting topic can encourage students to bring their prior knowledge to connect to the new knowledge, making them become good writers (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998).

The last factor developing students' writing ability is possibly adequacy and appropriateness of the teaching materials provided by the teacher. The students of the current study perceived in the interview that they could develop their writing because there were a number of handouts and exercises from different learning sources. This number was perceived as adequate for them to learn writing an English descriptive paragraph. In addition, the differences in difficulty level of handouts in each lesson allowed them to choose the most appropriate for their proficiency in English. Furthermore, the examples and exercises provided in each handout were comprehensible to help them understand the lessons better. As a result, the students did not need to search for other materials elsewhere as they were adequate and appropriate for the students. As suggested by Al Azri & Al-Rashdi (2014) a good way for a teacher to expect effective outcomes is that he or she should realize the differences of proficiency of students in a classroom. Therefore, materials provided need to be

various, multiple and appropriate for students in order to motivate and support the development of students learning as the materials are essential instrument in an EFL classroom to learn English.

When considering the writing aspects the students could develop, paragraph structure was found to be the most developed aspect possibly because students had learned about paragraph structure in a writing principle of Thai language in Matthayomsuksa 5. As Thai and English languages share the same structures of parts of a paragraph, the students could acquire their English paragraphing knowledge from the Thai principle course. As a result, they could do well on this aspect. On the other hand, paragraph unity was the least developed aspect possibly because of its complication. Students are required to compose writing with a concise topic sentence and develop a logical connected paragraph that is easy for the reader to understand. As this is a new knowledge for them, they might find it difficult.

Taking students' perceptions into account, the findings reveal that the majority of the students had positive perceptions toward learning through PBL approach. Some negative views were found by minority group of students. These mixed perceptions possibly relate to the students' different proficiencies in English. Although most of the students perceived PBL was a good teaching method as it was not only helpful for developing their writing ability but also communicative and cooperative learning skills, some other students who were recorded as having low English proficiency in their previous test scores pointed out that PBL was a difficult teaching method for them. As the teacher used English as a sole medium of instruction of the course and the students were asked to discuss in groups in English. The students with low proficiency of English possibly did not understand the teacher's explanation, which made them got lost at some points. As suggested by Gwee (2008) that PBL is not appropriate for Thai EFL context since students are considered having low proficiency of English. Thus, teachers should closely facilitate them by initiating the discussion or selecting the most English proficient student of the group to lead the discussion and to make students understand the teacher's explanation and a teacher should use as simple English as possible (Alajmi, 2014).

Another explanation for students' negative perceptions was that the students had never experienced learning writing English through PBL approach before and time

allocation given by the teacher was believed to be inadequate for low English proficiency students. The fact that PBL was likely a new teaching concept for students might make them find the process of learning complicated, affecting time they need to digest the new knowledge gained. Generally, in Thai EFL context, students are required to learn grammar rules and vocabulary without focusing on writing as a writing process since examinations usually test students' reading and grammar skills (Dueraman, 2013). Therefore, when the students learned English writing through this method in a limited time, they might have found it difficult.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the present study shows that problem-based learning is an effective teaching methodthat cannot only be implemented in ESL context and undergraduate level as found by previous studies (Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015; Sojisirikul, 2009) but also in an EFL context and a lower level of education where students' English is considered low intermediate. However, some limitations are needed to be addressed. Firstly, some low English proficiency students were confused about the PBL process, making them tended to rely on only a student with better English in the group. Secondly, the participants' lack of an ability to discuss in English made them experience problem in group discussion. Thirdly, time for the experiment in the present study was only about 18 hours provided for the students to learn the concept of writing a paragraph through to producing their own work. This allocated time seemed to be too limited for the students to effectively build up their cognitive knowledge for writing. Another limitation is the fact that the students were not able to access learning resources through the internet or the library at school, possibly making some of them find the materials provided by the teacher were too difficult to understand.

Expecting more effective outcomes in implementing PBL approach in an EFL context, the following pedagogical implications are offered:

1) Students should be clearly instructed about the role of each group memberand learning process of PBL before participating in PBL class as recommended by Kinnunen & Malmi (2005) that students should be informed about the PBL process and roles, and what it requires from students well before the course starts so that they can plan their own learning.

2) In the context where it is possible, the learning sources for students to learn should be searched and collected by themselves in order to promote self-directed and lifelong learning.

3) In some schools, where students are not able to access learning resources from school library or internet by themselves, the teacher should prepare the most appropriate resources for the students.

4) If the students are not proficient in English, students' native language should be used in some steps of the teaching, for example, teacher explanation of PBL process, rolesof students and a teacher, introduction of PBL and group discussion to make them more confident to discuss and share knowledge among the group members.

5) Expecting positive learning outcomes of writing skill, a teacher of PBL class should have to understand his or her role, especially a facilitating role when students are asked to identify known and unknown points of the problem and conduct group discussion.

6) One learning group should consist of equal numbers of students with low and high proficiency in English since students with low proficiency will be helped by students who have higher proficiency in English. In other words, the students of different abilities can help each other to explain things or share a good model of language performance in learning (Harmer, 1998; Moon, 2000).

7). As writing skill is time consuming, time to be spent for improving students' writing through this approach should be about 30 hours for working on one type of writing including searching information, brainstorming, and exchanging knowledge of writing among the group, composing three drafts of writing, revising, editing and self-evaluation (Sojisirikul, 2009).

The findings of the current study are suggestions rather than generalization. Since all teaching materials were provided by the teacher, this current study could not fully enhance and increase students' self-directed and lifelong learning. For future research, it may be interesting to implement PBL approach to teach other language skills such as reading and speaking skills in the context of EFL high school with learning facility including internet access and library where students are able to search and gather information by themselves.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Write a descriptive paragraph of 100-120 words.

Title...

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Group ....

Score obtained................................. Assessed by group...

Commend

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APPENDIX B

Lesson plans for PBL group (Experimental group)

Lesson plan 1

Department of foreign language   **Class:** Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Introduction of problem-based learning   **Time**: 2 periods (40 Minutes/period)
Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to know the characteristics of PBL.
2. Students will be able to know their roles while participating PBL class.
3. Students will be able to know the role of the teacher.

Learning skills

-

Teaching materials

-

Learning activities

Periods 1 & 2: What is PBL approach?

1. Activate students by asking some questions about the lesson.
   "Have you ever had a problem?'
   "What kind of problem do you usually have?"
   "What do you do when you have a problem?"
   "Who always helps you when you have a problem?"
   "Have you ever solved a problem yourself?"
   "Has anyone heard "Problem-based learning" before? If yes, can you explain it to your classmates. If not, can you guess what PBL is?
2. Explain what PBL is and what characteristics of PBL are to students.
3. Explain the teacher's and students' roles in PBL classroom.
4. Divide students into groups of 5 students. Each group includes at least 1 or 2students who have outstanding English proficiency, considering from their previous test scores in semester one.
5. Ask students to brainstorm the name of their own groups and choose the leader.
6. Ask students to brainstorm and discuss about the roles of every member in each group and presents to all classmates.
7. Ask students in the whole class to summarize the roles of the members.

Lesson plan 2

Department of foreign language   **Class:** Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Presentation of the problem and identify **Time**: 2 periods (40 minutes/period)

known and unknown points

Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to work cooperatively.
2. Students will be able to discuss known and unknown points.

Learning skills

1. Reading
2. Writing

Teaching materials

Worksheet 1

Learning activities

Period 1 & 2: Presentation of the problem and discussion ideas about known and unknown points

1. Elicit students' problems by asking "Have you ever had problems with writing in English?"
2. Write the instruction "Write a good descriptive paragraph of 100-120 words" on the board and elicit what they have to do.
3. Ask students to identify the keywords in the instruction (good descriptive writing) to check their background knowledge. Ask "Do you know what descriptive paragraph is?"
4. Ask students in the group to brainstorm, discuss and share ideas about known and unknown points about writing descriptive paragraph.
   The expected known points are:
   - A paragraph writing needs a topic.
   - A paragraph writing needs a topic sentence.
   - A paragraph needs a concluding sentence .
        The expected unknown points are:
   -What is descriptive writing?
   - How to write descriptive writing
   - How to write a paragraph
   - What should be in a paragraph?

- How to compose writing effectively   5. Distribute Worksheet 1 with model answer to every group.

6. Give support if necessary.

7. Ask students to write known and unknown points about descriptive paragraph writing and collect them for summary of known and unknown points and inform to the whole class.

Lesson plan 3

Department of foreign language   **Class:** Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Peer teaching   **Time**: 8 periods (40 minutes/period)

Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to gather information, discuss and share knowledge about paragraph writing and descriptive paragraph writing.
2. Students will be able to gather information, discuss and share knowledge about paragraph organization including paragraph coherence and cohesion (transitional devices).
3. Students will be able to gather information, discuss and share knowledge about paragraph unity and sentence structures of descriptive writing.

Language skills

1. Reading
2. Writing

Teaching materials

1. Handouts 1-24
   (Handouts 1-12 for periods 1and 2. Handouts 13-16 for periods 3 and 4. Handouts 17-20 for period s5 and 6. And handouts 21-24 for periods 7 and 8)
2. Worksheets 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
   (Worksheet s 2 and 3 for period s 1 and 2. Worksheet 4 for periods 3 and 4. Worksheet 5 for period s 5 and 6. Worksheet 6 for periods 7 and 8)

Learning activities

Period 1 & 2: Peer teaching, gather information, discuss and share knowledge about paragraph writing and descriptive paragraph writing.

1. Ask students in each group to recall their unknown points from the last period.
2. Summarize major unknown points written by the students in Worksheet 1 and write major unknown points on the board. The unknown points may include:
   "What is paragraph writing?"
   "What is descriptive writing?"
   "What words and sentence structures are used in descriptive paragraph writing?"
3. Tell students in each group to find out the answers for only 2 unknown points.
1) What is paragraph writing?
2) What is descriptive writing?

4. Provide Handouts 1-12 which are from different sources about definitions and explanation of paragraph writing, components of paragraph writing and descriptive paragraph writing on the desk in front of the classroom.

5. Ask students in each group to pick any handouts. Each member of the group may pick the same or different sources to read to gather information and share knowledge about what a paragraph and a descriptive paragraph are. Teacher observes and facilitates them.

6. Distribute Worksheet 2 to all students and ask them to work in group to identify descriptive paragraph.

7. Distribute Worksheet 3 to all students and ask them to work in group to identify the components of a descriptive paragraph.

8. When students finish, ask some students in each group to answer to the whole class and give the reasons for their answers. If some answers are wrong, explain to students explicitly by giving some hints and examples. For example, to help students get the answer in Worksheet 2.

9. Ask students to tell the main idea of the paragraph and underline. Then give them a hint that the descriptive paragraph uses a lot of descriptive and altogether they will reflect the main idea.

10. Collect their work.

Period 3 & 4: Peer teaching, gather information, discuss and share knowledge about paragraph organization including coherence and cohesion (transitional devices)

1. Review what students learned in the previous lesson.
2. Introduce the new unknown point: paragraph organization (transitional words)
3. Ask "How can you make your writing easy for readers to understand?" and have students answer. Say "Yes, when you write something, you should explain what should come first, later and last. And you have to make them flow smoothly. So, for this period, you will learn how to make your writing easy to understand for the reader. To learn the paragraph organization, two new words that you will learn are coherence and cohesion, but we will focus on paragraph transition."
4. Provide Handouts 13-16 which are from different sources about definitions and explanation of paragraph coherence and cohesion (transitional devices) on the desk in front of classroom.
5. Ask students in each group to pick any handouts. Each member of the group may pick the same or different sources to read to gather information and share knowledge about paragraph organization including coherence and cohesion. Teacher observes and facilitates them.
6. Distribute Worksheet 4 to students in every group to identify how to write paragraph coherently and cohesively.

7. When students finish, ask some students in each group to answer to the whole class and give the reasons for their answer.
8. If some answers are wrong, explain students explicitly by giving some hints and examples. Explicit explanation may include:

1) Firstly, ask students what the words provided mean and how to use them. If students give wrong meaning, give them examples:
- Football is popular sport in Thailand. <u>In other words</u>, it is seen and played everywhere.
- <u>In addition</u> to being a doctor, he is a writer.
2) Then give them the meanings. For example, 'in other words' means say the same thing but explain in different ways. 'To sum up' means to shorten or to summarize to whole paragraph.
3) Ask students to read again from sentence to sentence.
4) Ask students to read the sentence after the space and ask the meaning of that sentence and what word best connects the previous sentence to the next sentence.
5) Ask students whether it is possible to put this or that word in the space.
9. Collect their work.

Period 5 & 6: Peer teaching, gather information, discuss and share knowledge about paragraph unity

1. Introduce the new unknown points: paragraph unity.
2. Say "When you write a paragraph, you should write sentences that are relevant to the topic in the paragraph.
3. Provide Handouts 17-20 which are from many different sources explaining definitions and explanation of paragraph unity on the desk in front of classroom. Teacher asks students in each group to pick any handouts. Each member of the group may pick the same or different sources to read to gather information and share their knowledge about paragraph unity. Teacher observes and facilitates them.
4. Distribute Worksheet 5 to all students to work in group to identify a paragraph unity
5. When students finish, ask some students in each group to answer to the whole class and give the reasons of that answer.
6. If some answers are wrong, explain students explicitly:
1) Ask students to read the paragraph again.
2) Ask students what the main idea of that paragraph is.
3) For each paragraph, ask students about the keywords in every sentence and ask them if they are relevant or not relevant to the main idea.
7. Collect their work.

Period 7 &8: Peer teaching, gather information, discuss and share knowledge about sentencestructure of descriptive writing.

1. Introduce the last unknown point: descriptive sentence structure.
2. Provide Handouts 21-24 which are from different sources explaining of sentence structures of descriptive writing on the desk in front of classroom. Teacher asks students in each group to pick any handouts. Each member of the group may pick the same or different sources to read to gather information and share their knowledge
   about sentence structure of descriptive writing in group. Teacher observes and facilitates them.
3. Distribute Worksheet 6 to all students to work in group to identify how to write descriptive sentence structures.
4. When students finish, ask some students in each group to answer to the whole class and give the reasons for their answer.
5. If some answers are wrong, explain students explicitly by giving some hints and examples. For example: Picture One, ask them to look at the adjectives and structures they used in the sentences and ask them whether their writing are trying to describe something and structure is correct (part of speech) correct or not.
6. Ask them to read the examples again and ask them why the example sentences are correct.
7. Collect their work.

Lesson plan 4

Department of foreign language   **Class**: Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Presentation of writing   **Time**: 8 periods (40 minutes/period)

Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to write a descriptive paragraph in group.
2. Students will be able to give peer feedback.

Language skills

1. Reading
2. Writing

Teaching materials

1. Rubric for assessing descriptive paragraph writing
2. Worksheet 7 including Draft 1, 2 and 3

Learning activities

   Period 1 & 2: Writing a topic the first draft

1. Ask students in each group to discuss about the topic of their writing. The topic can be about a person, a place, an event, an object or a situation.
2. Ask students in each group to write the first draft of a descriptive paragraph of 100-120 words in group.
3. Observe while students are working and give support when necessary.

   Period 3 & 4: Giving peer feedbackabout parts of a paragraph, transitional devices, paragraph unity and sentence structures of descriptive writing.

1. Before students assess the other groups' writing, ask students "What does a good paragraph look like?"
2. Distribute the rubric and explain the descriptions of the rubric to the students. The rubric includes parts of a paragraph, transitional devices, paragraph unity and sentence structures of descriptive writing.
3. Ask students to exchange their writing to the other groups.
4. Ask students to help one another to assess other group's writing.
5. Ask students to give peer feedback by underlining, crossing out the mistakes they have found and give comments.
6. Ask students to return the assessed draft to the writer group.

Period 5 & 6: Refining, revising and writing the second draft

1. Before refining and revising the first draft, ask students.
   "What is the score of your first draft writing?"
   "What points of your first draft need to be refined and revised?
2. Ask students to check the comments and feedback given by other groups.
3. Ask students to refine and revise their writing according to assessment and feedback given by other groups.
4. Asks students to make their own decision to revise or not to revise the commented part.
5. Ask students to write the second draft in groups.

Period 7 & 8: Completing the final draft and submitting it to teacher

1. Before studentswrite the final draft, ask them about revision that they have made in the last period within the group.
2. Ask students to exchange their writing to the other groups for a quick peer feedback including vocabulary spelling, punctuations, etc.
3. Ask students to return them to the writer groups.
4. Ask students in each group to have a final check.
5. Ask students in each group to complete the final draft.
6. Ask students to submit the final draft to teacher in the classroom.
7. Says "Now, you have completed the final draft of descriptive writing. Next period, you will be asked to assess your own writing in groups"

Lesson plan 5

Department of foreign language   **Class**: Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Evaluation progress   **Time**: 2 periods (40 minutes/period)

Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to evaluate their own descriptive paragraph writing.

Language skills

1. Reading
2. Writing

Teaching material

Rubric for assessing descriptive paragraph writing

Learning activities

Period 1 & 2: Evaluatingtheir own final draft writing and teacher clarifying unclear points.

1. Distribute the rubric to every group. The rubric is the same asthe peer checking stage.
2. Ask students to share their knowledge and understanding about using the rubric in the class once again.
3. Ask students to help one another to evaluate their own writing.
4. Ask students to give comments and score their own writing and the reasons why their own writing deserve those scores.
5. Ask students to submit it to teacher.
6. Allow students to ask any questions about the writing and teacher clarifies unclear points by giving some hints and examples.

APPENDIX C

Lesson plans for non-PBL group (Controlled group)

Lesson plan 1

Department of foreign language   **Class**: Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Course orientation   **Time**: 2 periods (40minutes/period)

Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to understand the objectives of the course
2. Students will be able to understand paragraph writing

Language skills

1. Reading
2. Writing

Teaching materials

-

Learning activities

Period 1& 2: Inform the objectives of the courseand learn paragraph writing

1. Explain the objectives of the course to study for the whole semester.
2. Activate students by asking questions and have students answer.
   "Do you like writing in English, why?"
   "How often do you write in English?"
   "Do you have any difficulties while writing? What are they?"
   "Have you ever written a paragraph in English?"
   "Have you ever written descriptive?" and have students answer.
3. Say "This semester, we will learn how to write a descriptive paragraph" and ask "Have you ever learned how to write a descriptive paragraph?"
4. Write a sentence and ask "Is this paragraph writing?" and have students answer.
5. Distribute Handout 1(two short paragraphs to students and discuss what paragraph writing is with them.
6. Before finishing the class, give them a clue on what they are going to learn in the next period by saying "They are not good paragraph writing, why? We will be learning in the next period.

Lesson plan 2

Department of foreign language   **Class**: Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Components of paragraph writing and   **Time**: 2 periods (40 minutes/period)

characteristics of descriptive paragraph writing

Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to understand the components of paragraph writing.
2. Students will be able to understand different types of paragraph and the purposes briefly.
3. Students will be able to understand controlling idea.
4. Students will be able to understand the definition and characteristic of descriptive paragraph.

Language skills

1. Reading
2. Writing

Teaching materials

1. Handouts 2 and 3
2. Worksheet 1 and 2

Learning activities

Period 1 & 2: Components of paragraph writing; definition, characteristics and purposes of descriptive paragraphs.

1. Activate students' background knowledge by asking what they have learned in the last period.
2. Ask students to read the handout of these two sentences again and asks them to discuss why they are not good.
3. Explain by saying "These paragraphs are not good because they are without topic sentence and concluding sentence.
4. Ask students and have them answer to the following question.
    "Do you know how many parts of sentences are there in a paragraph?
5. Explain parts of a paragraph.
6. Ask students to work in pair and distributes Handout 2. There are two paragraphs in the handout. One of the two paragraphs is good because it consists of topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding sentence, while the other paragraph is without topic sentence and concluding sentence. Teacher asks them to read and answer which paragraph is better and why?

7. Ask students to share their answer and gives explanation.
8. Distribute Worksheet 1 to students to work in pair to identify parts of a paragraph.
9. Clarify the answer on the board.
10. Ask "Do you know how many types of paragraph there are?" Teacher does not expect the students to answer this question.
11. Say "There are many types of paragraph writing, but we will focus on descriptive paragraph.
12. Give students Handout 3and discusses with them what the characteristics of descriptive paragraphs are.
13. Distribute Worksheet 2 to students to work in pair to identify descriptive paragraph.
14. Ask students to exchange their worksheets to their friends and have they check the answers.
15. Give the answer and explanation.

Lesson plan 3

Department of foreign language   **Class**: Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Language used in descriptive   **Time**: 8 periods (40 minutes/period)

      paragraph writing

Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to understand the sentence structures of descriptive paragraph.
2. Students will be able to understand word choice.
3. Students will be able to understand coherence and cohesion (transitional devices).
4. Students will be able to understand paragraph unity.

Language skills

1. Reading
2. Writing

Teaching materials

1. Handouts 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8
2. Picture cards 1 and 2
3. Worksheet 3, 4 and 5

Learning activities

    Period 1 & 2: Sentence structures of descriptive paragraph

1. Activate students background knowledge by asking
   "Do you think writing a descriptive paragraph difficult?"
   "How to write interesting descriptive paragraph?" and have students answer.
2. Distribute Handout 4 including five sentences. Three of the five sentences are interesting and clear description, while the other two are not.
3. Ask students to read and choose the descriptive ones and ask them why.
4. Give answer and explanation about all five sentences on the board.
5. Explain about sentence structures used in descriptive writing.
6. Show two pictures on picture cards to students and asks them to work in pairs to write short descriptive sentences on the paper and choose some students to write on the board.
7. Ask students in whole class to read and asks them whether the sentences are descriptive or not and give the reasons.

8. Distribute Handout 5of good descriptive paragraph examples and discuss with students.
9. Distribute Worksheet 3 to students to work in pairs to write descriptive sentences.
10. Ask students to exchange their worksheets to their friends to check the answers.
11. Collect their work.

Periods 3 & 4: Word choice

1. Distribute Handout 6 and ask students to work in pair to read.
2. Review parts of a paragraph by asking students what the paragraph is about, what topic sentence is, what details in supporting sentences are and what concluding sentence is.
3. Ask them what words helped them to see the picture the writer was trying to create. As students say words, teacher writes them on the board.
4. Say "Now that we have had an opportunity to see how important word choice is in making ideas clear, we are going to look at some pictures and use words and sentences to describe the pictures.
5. Distribute empty paper to students to work in pairs, show Picture cards 2 and say "As we look at each picture, we will discuss words that come to our minds. Discusses with the students and ask them to list the related vocabulary on the paper. (The words are probably " busy, ignorant , work hard, a boy, innocent , sunny, sunbathing, enjoy, summer, surprised, birthday cake, sisters, blow, delicious, fresh, fast food, crispy, convenient).
6. Continue "After we define the vocabulary, we will be writing a sentence using some very precise word choices. We want our readers to be able to "see" the pictures we are writing about."
7. The classes then write sentences, using the words that are listed to write a precise sentence about the pictures.
8. Monitor student discussions while they are working with their partners to check their understanding of using precise word choice to clear ideas.
9. Ask some students to write on the board and ask the whole class to choose the most precise sentence and give the reasons.
10. Clarify and give explanation about the word choice.

Periods 5 & 6: Paragraph organization including coherence and cohesion (transitional devices)

1. Ask students
" How can you make your writing easy to read?"
"How can you make the reader understand your writing?"
"Does anyone know what paragraph coherence and cohesion are?"

"Do you know why writing needs to be coherent and cohesive?"

2. Distribute Handout 7 including two short paragraphs. One of the two is coherent, while the other is not.
3. Ask students to work in pairs to read and answer which one is easier to understand and why.
4. Give an explanation on paragraph coherence and cohesion. The focus is mainly on transitional words.
5. Distribute Worksheet 4 to students to work in pairs to identify transitional words.
6. Ask students to exchange their worksheet to their friends to check the answers.
7. Choose some students to read the answer of their peers in front of classroom.
8. Give answer and explanation.

Periods 7 & 8: Paragraph unity.

1. Say "In this period, we will learn about how to unify a paragraph"
2. Distribute Handout 8 including two short example paragraphs. One of the two paragraphs is full of relevant sentences and related to the topic, while some of the irrelevant sentences are in the other paragraph.
3. Say "In these two paragraphs, you can see some sentences do not related to the topic sentence.
4. Ask students to work in pair to read and identify which paragraph is better and why. Then discuss with the whole class.
5. Explain about paragraph unity to the whole class.
6. Distribute Worksheet 5 to students to work in pairs to identify paragraph unity.
7. Ask students to exchange their worksheet to another to check.
8. Give answer and explanation.

Lesson plan 4

Department of foreign language   **Class**: Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Writing draft 1, 2 and 3of descriptive   **Time**: 8 periods (40 minutes/period)
paragraph

Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to write a descriptive paragraph individually.
2. Students will be able to revise and refine their writing according to the feedback given by teacher.

Language skills

1. Listening
2. Speaking
3. Reading
4. Writing

Teaching materials

Worksheet 6

Learning activities

Period 1 &2: Writing the first draft

1. Ask students to write individually.
2. Give the topic to write. The topic is "The school canteen during lunch break"
3. Say "We all have learned about how to write a good descriptive paragraph, so from this period onward, you will need to apply your knowledge to write a descriptive paragraph"
4. Before students start to write, ask them to brainstorm the idea about the topic.
5. When students get the ideas, ask students to start writing the first draft of descriptive paragraph of 100-120 words.
6. Observe students writing and give support when necessary.
7. Asks students to submit their first draft to teacher.

Period 3 & 4: Teacher gives feedback and revising global issue.

1. Distribute the first draft to the writers.
2. Ask students to look through the comments given by teacher point by point.
3. Choose some points with errors in the global issue and write on the board.
4. Ask the class whether they can find the errors including parts of paragraph, transitional words, paragraph unity and descriptive sentence structures.

5. Ask the class to answer.
6. Explain and clarify global issues clearly.

Period 5 & 6: Revising, refining local issue and write the second draft**.**

1. Ask students to revise and refine their first draft from the last period.
2. Choose some points with errors in local issue and write on the board.
3. Ask the class whether they can find the errors including spelling, punctuations and sentence structures.
4. Ask the class to answer.
5. Explain and clarify local issue clearly.

Period 7& 8: Completing and submitting the final draft

1. Ask students to have a final check for both global and local issues.
2. Ask students to complete the final draft.
3. Collect the final draft.

Lesson plan 5

Department of foreign language   **Class**: Mattayomsuksa 6

Topic: Teacher distributes the results   **Time**: 2 periods (40 minutes/period)

  and clarification.

Learning objectives

1. Students will be able to understand whole learning contents of the course.
2. Students will be able to understand how to write a good descriptive paragraph.

Language skills

1. Listening
2. Speaking

Teaching materials

  -

Learning activities

  Period 1& 2: Distributes the results and clarifications

1. Distribute the checked final draft writing and results to students.
2. Summarizes the whole content.

APPENDIX D

Handouts

Handout 1

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is a group of sentences that fleshes out a single idea. In order for a paragraph to be effective, it must begin with a topic sentence, have sentences that support the main idea of that paragraph, and maintain a consistent flow.

Note: different disciplines have different requirements of what a well-written paragraph may entail. You should follow these instructions

• presents a single idea

• begins with a topic sentence that makes this single idea evident

• contains support in form of sentences that convey this single idea

• is strategically organized to maintain flow

• maintains your essay's objective

• informs and entertains your reader about your paper's overall idea. (Taken fromhttps://www.monmouth.edu/uploadedFiles/Resources_for_Writers/The _Writing_Process/Paragraphs2013.pdf)

Handout 2

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is a series of sentences that are organized and coherent, and are all related to a single topic. Almost every piece of writing you do that is longer than a few sentences should be organized into paragraphs. This is because paragraphs show a reader where the subdivisions of an essay begin and end, and thus help the reader see the organization of the essay and grasp its main points.

Paragraphs can contain many different kinds of information. A paragraph could contain a series of brief examples or a single long illustration of a general point. It might describe a place, character, or process; narrate a series of events; compare or contrast two or more things; classify items into categories; or describe causes and effects.

(Taken from https://wts.indiana.edu/writing-guides/paragraphs-and-topic-sentences.html)

Handout 3

What is a paragraph?

Many beginning writers are not exactly sure what a paragraph should look like. They are unsure how long a paragraph should be, when one paragraph should end and the next one begins, and what logic controls the clustering of sentences together in a paragraph.

In brief, a paragraph is the communication of a single assertion or thought, with enough detail or explanation to make that thought clear to a reader. A new paragraph begins when one thought is fully developed, and a new thought begins. Rules govern the organization and development of paragraphs and provide useful checkpoints for revision

(Taken from https://www.englishgrammar.org/paragraph-writing-tips/)

Handout 4

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is a component of fictional prose and non-fiction writings.

When writing essays, research papers, books, etc., new paragraphs are indented to show their beginnings. Each new paragraph begins with a new indentation.

The purpose of a paragraph is to express a speaker's thoughts on a particular point in a clear way that is unique and specific to that paragraph. In other words, paragraphs shouldn't be mixing thoughts or ideas. When a new idea is introduced, generally, a writer will introduce a new paragraph.

(Taken from https://writingexplained.org/grammar-dictionary/paragraph)

Handout 5

What is descriptive writing?

Descriptive paragraphs include details that appeal to the five senses: sight, taste, touch, smell, and hearing. In a descriptive paragraph, the writer must convey information that appeals to all the senses in order to give the best possible description to the reader. Descriptive paragraphs are commonly used in fiction and non-fiction writing to help immerse readers into the world of the author. Though there are no hard and fast rules for how exactly these paragraphs should be structured, there are several suggestions that can help you write an effective and appealing descriptive paragraph.

1. Make sure to choose a meaningful person, place, or thing

Before you begin your paragraph, you have to be sure to pick something that is worth describing. If you want to describe a character, make sure the person is interesting in some way. If you want to describe an object, make sure it has some deeper meaning beyond itself so you have enough to write about. If you pick a place, make sure you can describe it in a unique way that can capture a reader's attention.

2. Introduce the person, place, or thing you are describing

If you want to get the reader's attention, then you should let him or her know what you're describing as soon as possible instead of leaving them guessing

3. Engage your reader's sense of sight

You can start with what the reader can see and appeal to his or her sense of sight to help introduce the object. Since sight is the most helpful sense, any good descriptive paragraph must first discuss what the writer wants the reader to visualize. Using strong adjectives to illustrate your scene, moment, experience or item to the reader will help provide a visual picture in your reader's mind. Keep in mind that, while adjectives can help convey a sense of the subject, overusing them can lead to boring, overwrought writing

4. Describe smells and tastes if you can

Think about how you can describe the topic, scene, or moment to the reader in terms of how it smells and tastes. The best descriptive paragraphs make the reader feel as if he or she were actually experiencing the thing he or she was reading about, not just reading about it. Include a sentence or two about how your topic smells and use a few poignant adjectives to relay the smell of it

to the reader. "It tastes good" is not going to provide a specific experience for your reader. However, "It tastes like Grandma's apple pie when it's fresh and still bubbling around the edges - crunchy, flavorful and sweet" helps describe the distinct flavor of your item. Of course, not

everything you describe will have a relevant taste or smell; if it does, though, it can help to include it

5. Describe how the moment or item feels

As you continue writing your paragraph, write a sentence or two about how the experience feels. What does it remind you of as you imagine yourself running your hand along its surface, or the tingling feeling you feel run down your back? How are you reacting to the moment? Again, use descriptive adjectives to describe how the moment feels. Avoid using general statements like "it feels nice", which isn't descriptive at all. Opt for specific, definitive examples that relay the feeling of something to the reader. If you're describing how the object or item feels for a certain character, this can also give readers a sense of what it was like

(Taken from https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Descriptive-Paragraph)

Handout 6

What is descriptive writing?

Descriptive details allow sensory recreations of experiences, objects, or imaginings. In other words, description encourages a more concrete or sensory experience of a subject, one that allows the reader to transport himself or herself into a scene. Writing that lacks description is in danger of being plain or overly general.

There are many different uses of descriptive detail. Although most commonly associated with creative writing, description enhances a wide variety of subjects. Writing that effectively uses descriptive detail will allow a reader to do more than merely see words on a page. Original description gives writing a sense of honesty and believability, while concise details can help enhance your focus. Descriptive details cause a reader to feel, to hear, to taste, to become intimately connected with the images and experiences being recreated. There are many different ways in which descriptive detail can be included in writing. Whether to describe, persuade, illustrate or demonstrate, the descriptive details you include in your writing should serve a purpose not just pad your writing with more sensory detail.

It is important to remember that human beings learn about the world through using the five senses. They are our primary source of knowledge about the world. Therefore, writing which incorporates vivid, sensory detail is more likely to engage and affect the reader.

(Taken from
http://www.wright.edu/~david.wilson/eng1100/sensorydetails.pdf)

Handout 7

What is descriptive writing?

There are many different styles and purposes for writing. One type of writing is called descriptive writing. In this lesson, you'll learn about descriptive writing and how to write a descriptive paragraph or essay.

Let's look at a couple of sentences. Ready? Ok. Here's the first sentence:

"The chicken was good at dancing".

Pretty straightforward!

Now the second sentence:

"Despite being an ordinary egg-laying chicken, Renaldo dazzled the cheering crowd as he peered confidently over the rims of his metallic gray sunglasses while popping, locking, and sliding across the dance floor of the barn under the glittering lights of the makeshift disco ball".

Which of these sentences would you want to read again? Did you select the second sentence? If you did, it's most likely because it was more interesting and helped to create a picture in your mind of Renaldo the disco chicken. It sounds like he is an EGG-cellent dancer!

The second sentence is an example of descriptive writing. Descriptive writing is when an author uses carefully selected words to help create a vivid picture in the reader's mind. Oftentimes, these words involve sensory details, which focus on the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings that are associated with a particular topic.

The goal of descriptive writing is for readers to feel like they are actually experiencing what an author is describing. For example, there were a few descriptions in the sentence that most likely helped you create a mental image of Renaldo's dance fever like: 'cheering crowd'

'he peered confidently over the rims of his metallic gray sunglasses'

'popping, locking, and sliding across the dance floor'

'glittering lights of the makeshift disco ball'

Now that we've learned about descriptive writing, let's hatch a plan to figure out the best way to write a descriptive paragraph or essay. Sorry, but all these chicken jokes must be cracking you up, huh?

The first thing to do is to use your senses. Once you have selected a topic to write about, it's important to start thinking about what sensory details you can include to help your readers feel like they are experiencing what you are writing.

(Taken from https://study.com/academy/lesson/how-to-write-a-descriptive-paragraph-or-essay-lesson-for-kids.html)

Handout 8

What is descriptive writing?

Take some time to think about the differences between a short and a long conversation that you've had with someone about a specific event. Chances are that the short conversation lacked details and got straight to the point. The long conversation most likely had so much detail that you could almost picture yourself being there now.

Or, think about getting directions from friends. If you were invited to a party, would you prefer the directions that just said, 'By the school,' or would you prefer detailed directions that provide specific streets? Description is an important part of daily life and has an even bigger role in writing.

Descriptive writing is a literary device in which the author uses details to paint a picture with their words. This process will provide readers with descriptions of people, places, objects, and events through the use of suitable details. The author will also use descriptive writing to create sensory details as a means of enhancing the reading experience. If done effectively, the reader will be able draw a connection through the use of sensory details that include seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting. These techniques will assist you in becoming not only a better writer, but will alsomake your writing more engaging for readers.

(Taken from https://study.com/academy/lesson/descriptive-writing-definition-techniques-examples.html)

Handout 9

Structure of paragraph writing

In many languages, the fundamental unit of composition is the paragraph. A paragraph consists of several sentences that are grouped together. This group of sentences together discuss one main subject. In formal academic English, paragraphs have three principal parts. These three parts are the topic sentence, body sentences, and the concluding sentence. We will also talk briefly about details in paragraphs.

The Topic Sentence

A topic sentence usually comes at the beginning of a paragraph; that is, it is usually the first sentence in a formal academic paragraph. (Sometimes this is not true, please keep to this rule unless you are instructed otherwise.) Not only is a topic sentence the first sentence of a paragraph, but, more importantly, it is the most general sentence in a paragraph. What does "most general" mean? It means that there are not many details in the sentence, but that the sentence introduces an overall idea that you want to discuss later in the paragraph.

Supporting Sentences

The second and third sentences are called supporting sentences. They are called "supporting" because they "support," or explain, the idea expressed in the topic sentence. Of course, paragraphs in English often have more than two supporting ideas. The paragraph above is actually a very short paragraph. At minimum, you should have at least five to seven sentences in your paragraph.

The Concluding Sentence

In formal paragraphs you will sometimes see a sentence at the end of the paragraph which summarizes the information that has been presented. This is the concluding sentence. You can think of a concluding sentence as a sort of topic sentence in reverse.

Consider a hamburger that you can buy at a fast-food restaurant. A hamburger has a top bun (a kind of bread), meat, cheese, lettuce, and other elements in the middle of the hamburger, and a bottom bun. Note how the top bun and the bottom bun are very similar. The top bun, in a way, is like a topic sentence, and the bottom bun is like the concluding sentence. Both buns "hold" the meat, onions, and so on. Similarly, the topic sentence and concluding sentence "hold" the supporting sentences in the paragraph.

(Taken from http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/students/fwalters/para.html)

Handout 10

Structure of paragraph writing

Topic Sentence

Q: What is the topic sentence?

A: The topic sentence is the first sentence in a paragraph.

Q: What does it do?

A: It introduces the main idea of the paragraph.

Q: How do I write one?

A: Summarize the main idea of your paragraph. Indicate to the reader what your paragraph will be about.

Example:

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live. As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.

Supporting sentence

Q: What are supporting sentences?

A: They come after the topic sentence, making up the body of a paragraph.

Q: What do they do?

A: They give details to develop and support the main idea of the paragraph.

Q: How do I write them?

A: You should give supporting facts, details, and examples.

Example:

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. ***First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live***. As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.

Concluding Sentence

Q: What is the concluding sentence?

A: The concluding sentence is the last sentence in a paragraph.

Q: What does it do?

A: It restates the main idea of your paragraph.

Q: How do I write one?

A: Restate the main idea of the paragraph using different words.

Example:

There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed. Canadian cities have many parks and lots of space for people to live. ***As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live.***

(Taken from https://www.testden.com/toefl/writing-tutorial/parts-of-a-paragraph.htm)

Handout 11

Structure of paragraph writing

Parts of a Paragraph

A paragraph is a group of sentences about one topic. It contains a topic sentence, supporting details and sometimes a concluding sentence. The sentences follow one another from the beginning to the end of the paragraph. A paragraph is usually part of a longer piece of writing, such as a letter or essay.

The topic sentence

The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of the paragraph. It states the main idea of the paragraph. A good topic sentence tells the reader exactly what the rest of the paragraph will be about.

The supporting sentences

The supporting sentences are the middle sentences of the paragraph. They provide details such as explanations or examples that expand on or support the topic sentence. Supporting sentences are sometimes connected by transition words or phrases.

The concluding sentence

A concluding sentence is sometimes used in longer paragraphs to sum up the ideas presented. It expresses the same idea as the topic sentence but in different words. It can start with a transition such as clearly or in conclusion.

Example:

Remembering the Place Where I Grew Up

Rapid City is the medium-sized town where I grew up, and it is located in the state of South Dakota, which is a state in the north-middle part of the United States. In my neighborhood there were large, old oak trees and green lawns, surrounded by hills covered in pine trees. The street was quiet, with only the sound of birds singing and some cars passing every once in a while. During the cold, snowy winters, most people stayed inside, and outside you could smell wood burning in fireplaces and see smoke coming out chimneys. In the summer, you could see people walking dogs or jogging, hear lawnmowers, smell cut-fresh grass, and see squirrels jumping from tree to tree

in the daytime and bats flapping and diving in the sky at nighttime. My hometown made me feel secure and comfortable. Now I usually visit the place where I grew up one time a year to visit my parents. Not a lot has changed except now there are more people, more traffic, and more places to go, such as shopping malls and restaurants. *I feel content when I think about the place where I grew up.*

The example paragraph above shows that the sentence in bold is a topic sentence, the following underlined sentences after the topic sentences are supporting sentences and the last sentence is in italic is concluding sentence.

(Taken from http://www.settlementatwork.org/lincdocs/linc5 7/academic.skills/pdfs/pdf.academic.skill.LINC5/02.parts.para.pdf and www.otan.us/teachwtech/upload/example/533/hometownprompt.docx)

Handout 12

Structure of paragraph writing

The three basic elements of a paragraph are a good topic sentence, a clear and concise body, and a conclusion that wraps up the point you're trying to convey. Combining these elements with clarity of thought and word, will ensure that what you're trying to say comes through loud and clear every time.

Topic Sentence

Topic sentences come at the beginning of each paragraph. Topic sentences should be general statements; introduce the overall idea without going into detail. The first sentence should also be indented. Your topic sentence is commonly referred to as the "controlling idea" of the paragraph.

Supporting Sentences

The body of the paragraph contains sentences that follow the topic sentence. Provide additional details and give a clear, coherent idea of what your paragraph is about. Insert facts, make arguments and analyze the issue.

Conclusion

The final sentences should sum up all of the information found in the topic and body sentences. By this point, you should have made your case. This is where connections are made. Think of the conclusion sentence as the reverse of the topic sentence; the final statement should be general, but sum up the entire paragraph.

(Taken from https://penandthepad.com/three-elements-good-paragraph-12101577.html)

Handout 13

Coherence and cohesion

Coherence refers to the linking of ideas in a logical sequence or order. Cohesion refers to the organization of sentences and ideas in your essay working together as a whole within their paragraphs. They hold together by cohesive devices (transitional words and expressions). This makes it very easy for the reader to follow your presentation of information in the essay. They don't get lost or confused. Did you write in clear paragraphs that are organized around central ideas? It's like listening to a story that's smooth and easy to follow.

Here are some useful transitional/linking words and phrases to use to show the different relationships between your ideas and sentences:

Addition:

also, again, in addition, additionally, furthermore, further, moreover, as well as, what's more, besides this/that,

Contrast (show two things are different):

on the other hand, however, despite this, conversely, in contrast, on the contrary, although, while, though, compared with, in comparison with, rather, whereas, but, instead of, in spite of, still, nevertheless, regardless, otherwise

Compare (show two things are similar/alike):

likewise, similarly, also, in the same way, in comparison

Sequence:

first, second (etc.), to begin with, initially, at first, then, next, from there, and then, following this, finally, lastly

Example:

for example, for instance, a good example of this is, such as, to illustrate, in particular, particularly, namely, specifically

Consequence:

therefore, as a result, thus, so, consequently, admittedly, so that, depending on

Summary:

in summary, in conclusion, overall, in short, in brief, to sum up, in other words, all in all, to put it differently, to summarize, on the whole,

(Adapted from http://yourieltstutor.com/cohesive-devices-transitional-wordsphrases-for-essay-writing/)

Handout 14

Paragraph coherence and cohesion

What are cohesive devices?

These are often called by different names such as :linkers, discourse markers, transitional words, signposting language or connectors. These are words like "however", "for example" ,"to conclude" ,"also" "in addition" "therefore", "similarly" and so on. However, they need to be used correctly and effectively.

Example:

An Important Possession

If I have to choose one thing that is important in my life, it is my notebook computer. It is an Acer notebook running Windows 7. It's a fairly cheap notebook that I bought about four years ago. It's black and thin and has rounded edges that are soft and smooth when you pick it up. It's also light enough for me to carry in my backpack. **Moreover**, it can do nearly everything I need it to do. **For example**, I can create documents, design new pages on my website, make recordings and download TV shows. **In addition** to many files I have saved for my work, it contains a lot of photos and music. **However,** it is not a perfect computer . It crashed a few years ago and since then it's been much slower. **Furthermore**, it has downloaded some programs that I hate. I don't know how to get rid of them. **Overall though**, this computer is pretty reliable, convenient and allows me to work anywhere I go.

Results and Consequences	Rephrasing	Contrasts and Concessions	Giving Opinions
• Owing to • As a result • Due to • Consequently • Thus • Because of this • Therefore	• Put more simply • That is to say • In simple terms • In other words • Rather	• Admittedly • On the other hand • Alternatively • In contrast • Although • However • But • Despite • In spite of • Even though • Nevertheless	• In my opinion • It seems to me that • In my view • I believe that • I think that • I feel that • I cannot agree • I disagree • I am of the opinion

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Concluding	Emphasising	Causes	Reformulation
• To Conclude • In Conclusion • To Sum up	• In Particular • Clearly • Specifically • Obviously • Above all • Mainly • Especially	• Since • As • Due to • As a result of • Because	• In other words • In simple terms • Put simply • That is to say • Rather

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Addition	Comparison	Giving Examples	Sequencing
• Moreover • Additionally • Furthermore • In addition • Also • Too • As well as	• Similarly • Compared to • Likewise • Equally • Also • In the same way	• For example • To Illustrate this.. • For Instance • Such as • In other words • Namely	• Firstly • To begin with • After that • Thirdly • Next • Finally • Lastly

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(Adapted from https://ieltsfocus.com/2017/07/20/cohesive-devices-in-ielts/ and http://www.eslflow.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Descriptive_paragraphs___answers_2.pdf)

Handout 15

Paragraph coherence and cohesion

What are Cohesion & Coherence?

Coherence is about the unity of the ideas and cohesion the unity of structural elements. One way to do this is through the use of cohesive devices: logical bridges (repetition), verbal bridges (synonyms), linking words, and clear back referencing.

With logical bridges, the same idea of a topic is carried over (repeated) from sentence to sentence, and successive sentences can be constructed in parallel form. With verbal bridges, key words or synonymous words can be repeated, pronouns can replace nouns and transition words (as shown below) can be used.   In the paragraph below, words and phrases that serve to increase the coherence of the paragraph are highlight and underlined. As this sample paragraph indicates, coherence and cohesion in a paragraph is established by combining more than one device.

Example	Remarks
Changes in our society in recent years have weakened family life. **First of all**, today's mothers spend much less time with their children. A generation ago, most houses got by on Dad's payback, **and** Mom stayed home. **Now** many mothers work, and their children attend an after school program, stay with a neighbor, **or** go home to an empty house. **Another** change is that families no longer eat together. **In the past,** Mom would be home and fix a full dinner. Dinner today is more likely to be taken out food or TV dinners eaten at home, or fast food eaten out, with different members. **Finally**, television has taken the place of family eating at different times. **But**	The topic sentence Introduces the three stages which are then explained in more detail.

 Verbal bridge: The second sentence includes a key word "reduced", linking the idea to the previous sentence |

now families are more likely to be looking at TV set than talking to one another. **Clearly**, modern life is a challenge to family life.	though in a different form from earlier ("reduction"). A similar repetition occurs in the third sentence. **Logical bridge:** The processes of the first two stages are described in parallel form. The final sentence sums up this process, clearly signalled by "finally".

A more direct way of emphasizing the inherent logic of a paragraph is through the use of linking words and phrases which mark transitions within and between sentences

Example / Explanation	Addition	Result / Reason	Attitude	Contrast / Comparison
for example, for instance, that is, In other words,	moreover, furthermore, in addition, additionally, and	so, consequently, thus, as a result, for this reason,	naturally, certainly, fortunately, undoubtedly, strangely enough,	however, nevertheless, on the contrary, in contrast,

		owing to this, therefore, accordingly,	of course, predictably,	on the one hand, . . . on the other hand, in comparison, still, yet, but
Time	**Summary**	**Order**	**Back reference**	
at first, next, then, later, in the end,	finally, in conclusion, in short, to sum up,	first(ly), second(ly), third(ly), last(ly), finally,	this that these those such	

(Adapted from http://writing.chalmers.se/en/75-coherence-cohesion and https://apessay.com/order/?rid=ea55690ca8f7b080)

Handout 16

Paragraph coherence and cohesion

Transitional phrases

Here we'll consider how transitional words and phrases can help make our writing clear and cohesive.

A key quality of an effective paragraph is unity. A unified paragraph sticks to one topic from start tofinish, with every sentence contributing to the central purpose and main idea of that paragraph.But a strong paragraph is more than just a collection of loose sentences. Those sentences need to beclearly connected so that readers can follow along, recognizing how one detail leads to the next. A paragraph with clearly connected sentences is said to be cohesive.

Prepositional phrase

above /alongside / beneath / beyond / farther along /   in back

 in front /nearby / on top of /   to the left / to the right /   under

upon

 (Adapted from https://is.muni.cz/el/1422/podzim2013/MVD027K/Jessup_Legal_Writing_transitional_words.pdf)

Handout 17

Paragraph unity

A paragraph is unified if its main idea is consistently developed without unrelated comments or references. The following suggestions should help you create unified paragraphs:

1. Construct a focused topic sentence and then develop it through the entire paragraph.

2. Do not add anything to the paragraph that does not develop or support the main idea in the topic sentence.

Example of a Paragraph that is not Unified

*There are many styles of martial arts, and you must do some research in order to choose the right one for your needs. First, your should decide your reasons for learning a martial art: fitness, self-defense, or tournament competition, for example. You should consider how much you are willing to spend on lessons and equipment. Before selecting a teacher, observe how he or she interacts with students. Ask about the teacher's own training and skill level. **The actor Bruce Lee held black belts in a number of martial arts**. Find out what professional associations the instructor belongs to, and verify his or her status in the martial arts community. By inquiring and asking questions, you can find a martial arts program that will bring you pleasure and physical benefits.*

Note how the sentence about Bruce Lee breaks the unity of the idea in the sentence. If this sentence is omitted, the paragraph will become unified.

(Taken from http://www.flyingwords.com/paragraph-unity.html)

Handout 18

Paragraph unity

Paragraph Unity

The paragraph is considered as one of the basic unit of organization when it comes to writing. One of the basic functions of the paragraph is to present the idea of the writer in a particular subject matter.

Unity means that the paragraph should be united as one. The paragraph must not only be complete on its development rather it should also be unified with its structure. It means that the topic sentence in the paragraph should be supported by all of the other sentences.

In establishing paragraph unity, determining what the topic sentence is all about is very important. It is used to guide the specific focus of the paragraph's composition as well as in cutting out some details within. Furthermore, the topic sentence tells the readers about the things to come up or the things that will follow after.

(Taken from
https://writing.wikinut.com/Unity%2CCoherence%2CEmphasis-and-Topic-Sentence-in-the-Paragraph/yspts0z2/)

Handout 19

Paragraph unity

What is unity in a paragraph?

Unity in a paragraph means that the entire paragraph should focus on one single idea. The supporting details should explain the main idea. The concluding sentence should end the paragraph with the same idea. Thus, a unified paragraph presents a thought, supports it with adequate details and completes it with a conclusion.

(1) The human body is a wonderful piece of work that nature has created. (2) It is not beautiful like the body of a butterfly or peacock but it is shaped practically. (3) It can do many types of work which other animals cannot. (4) It is not strong like the body of a tiger. (5) But in place of physical strength it has a big and sharp brain. (6) By using this brain the human physique has been able to overcome many of its limitations. (7) By sitting in an aeroplane it flies faster than a kite, by riding a motorcycle it travels faster than a leopard, and by firing a machine gun it fights much better than a tiger. (8)In spite of all this, the human body suffers from many diseases because it has a weakness for habits such as smoking, drinking and overeating. (9) When it is healthy the body can give great pleasure but when it is sick it can cause great pain. (10) The wise man would always keep his body fit because a healthy mind can work only in a healthy body.

The first sentence states the main idea of the paragraph and claims the superiority of the human body over the rest of the creation. It enables the reader to expect the following ideas in the paragraph that explain and illustrate the qualities and attributes of the human body.

The second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sentences compare, contrast, elucidate and justify the main idea or topic sentence. They establish the main theme with logical explanations and transitions. They create a graphic picture in the minds of the reader with suitable and appropriate language expressions. In brief, they develop the main idea of the paragraph.

The eighth and the ninth sentences interpret and analyze the limitations of the human body and prove the strength of the topic sentence. They, further, lead the main idea into a concluding thought. Finally, the tenth sentence concludes with the idea that the human body should be well preserved for a proper functioning of the system and that a healthy mind can work only in a healthy body. Thus the paragraph, The Human Body, is a unified paragraph

.(Taken from http://writeenglish.net/paragraphunity1-1.p

Handout 20

Paragraph unity

Unity simply means that all sentences support the topic and the controlling idea. Supporting sentences must support the topic sentence using examples, details, definitions, or steps. Then the concluding sentence restates the topic sentence.

Let's take a moment and look at an example. Notice in this example that one sentence does not support the topic sentence.

With the widespread use of the cell phone, many teenagers have become addicted to texting. The average teenager texts 2,000 to 3,000 messages every month. Companies are developing new ways to communicate globally. This addiction has caused alarm, as teenagers prefer to communicate even in thesame room by texting. Experts suggest that parents should limit cell phone use to help teenagers overcome their addictions.

As we read the paragraph, did you notice the sentence that breaks unity?

Let's look at the paragraph again. The Topic Sentence says, "…many teenagers have become addicted to texting." Which sentence in the paragraph does not support the topic?

Notice the sentence in the middle of the paragraph. "Companies are developing new ways to communicate globally." This sentence is about companies developing new ways to communicate globally. It is not about teenagers becoming addicted to texting. This sentence breaks the unity of the paragraph.

(Taken from https://ellcenter.com/essay/paragraph-unity/)

Handout 21

Sentence structures of descriptive writing

One way of improving your letters and documents is to write descriptive sentences. Descriptive sentences provide more information and help you express your ideas more clearly.

There are several ways to write descriptive sentences.

Use Adjectives

One way of writing descriptive sentences is to place adjectives before nouns. It is possible to use more than one adjective to describe a noun.

Some examples are given below.

- She is a student.
- She is a brilliant student.
- She is a brilliant and hardworking student.

By simply placing one or two adjectives before the noun, we manage to provide more information.

Adjectives can also go after linking verbs. Common linking verbs include: is, am, are, was, were, appear, seem, turn etc.

- That is an interesting novel.
- That novel is interesting.
- She is upset.
- He is tired.

Note that in the last example, we used the past participle form 'tired' as an adjective. Participles are often used to describe nouns. In this case, they serve the same purpose as adjectives.

- A rolling stone gathers no moss.
- Here the present participle 'rolling' modifies the noun 'stone'.
Use precise vocabulary

If you only use basic verbs such as go, get, talk and walk, your writing will become monotonous. There is no harm in using these verbs but there is a limit to what they can express. Therefore, use more expressive verbs.

Study the examples given below.

- He earns $300 a week. (This sentence sounds much better than 'He gets $300 a week.)
- I received the parcel this morning. (Better than 'I got the parcel this morning'.)
- (Taken from https://www.englishgrammar.org/sentences-descriptive/)

Handout 22

Sentence structures of descriptive writing

Descriptive sentence structures

Descriptive writing has a unique power and appeal, as it evokes sights, smells, sounds, textures, and tastes. Using description in your writing brings the world within your text to your reader.

The first step in using effective description is to focus on a dominant impression. A dominant impression creates a mood or atmosphere in your paper. This mood can be conveyed through effective descriptive writing. For example, pay attention to the mood in the following paragraph.

"My family ate dinner at Merrymead Diner every Friday night while I was a child".

"We huddled close in a large, red booth as we scanned the familiar menu".

"The aroma of gravy over creamy mashed potatoes lingered in the air".

"I snuggled close to my mom's arm as she ordered our drinks".

The waitress brought our thick milkshakes out on a tray and placed them in front of us on a paper doily".

"The jukebox in the back played songs that we all knew the words to, and we sang along until our food arrived, hot and enticing on the table".

"Outside I shivered in the cold air, but in the diner I was cozy, munching on crispy French fries and enjoying a hot, juicy cheeseburger".

Can you feel the mood of this paragraph? The author is trying to convey a feeling of safety, comfort, and happiness. Notice how the author does not tell the reader she feels safe and happy. She shows the reader through descriptive detail. Her dominant impression is one of comfort and happiness.

Sensory description uses sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste to sketch an impression in writing. Consider a paragraph without sensory description.

Example:

> *"My sister and I walked along the boardwalk each afternoon of our vacation. We watched the ocean and listened to the waves. Usually we stopped for a snack at one of the many stores that line the boardwalk. Afterwards, we walked along the beach and let our feet get wet"*.

Now, consider this paragraph with all five sensory descriptors: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

> *"My sister and I walked along the boardwalk one afternoon on our vacation. The hot boards warmed our bare feet. We watched the foam-covered waves topple over each other and then slide back into sea. The crashing water competed with the exuberant yells from the seagulls. We bought a perfectly oval fluff of pink cotton candy that dissolved sweetly in our mouths. Afterwards, we walked along the edge of the water, letting the warm salty air blow our hair away from our necks as the cool water lapped over our toes"*.

(Taken from https://www.iup.edu/writingcenter/writing-resources/organization-and-structure/descriptive-writing/)

Handout 23

Sentence structures of descriptive writing

Sentence structures of descriptive writing

In descriptive writing, the author does not tell the reader what was seen, felt, tested, smelled, or heard. Rather, he describes something that he experienced and, through his choice of words, makes it seem real. In other words, descriptive writing is vivid, colorful, and detailed.

Bringing Words to Life

Descriptive writing creates an impression in the reader's mind of an event, a place, a person, or thing. The writing will be such that it will set a mood or describe something in such detail that if the reader saw it, they would recognize it. Descriptive writing will bring words to life and makes the text interesting.

Some examples of descriptive text include:

- *The sunset filled the entire sky with the deep color of rubies, setting the clouds ablaze.*
- *The waves crashed and danced along the shore, moving up and down in a graceful and gentle rhythm like they were dancing.*
- *The painting was a field of flowers, with deep and rich blues and yellows atop vibrant green stems that seemed to beckon you to reach right in and pick them.*
- *The old man was stooped and bent, his back making the shape of a C and his head bent so far forward that his beard would nearly have touched his knobby knees had he been just a bit taller.*
- *His deep and soulful blue eyes were like the color of the ocean on the clearest day you can ever imagine.*
- *The soft fur of the dog felt like silk against my skin and her black coloring glistened as it absorbed the sunlight, reflecting it back as a perfect, deep, dark mirror.*

(Adaptedfrom http://examples.yourdictionary.com/descriptive-text-examples.html)

Handout 24

Sentence structures of descriptive writing

The descriptive essay needs to include sentences that give a clear picture of the event, person, or thing that is being described.

Covey the Image in Your Details

Sentence structure is vitally important in a descriptive essay. If your sentences are too plain, you will not be able to convey the sensory images that make the essay descriptive. Each sentences should contain vivid verbs and details that will help the reader visualize what you are trying to show. The purpose of the descriptive essay is to describe not only visual images, but details that will engage the other senses, too. You should be sure to alternate between sentences that create sound, taste, touch, and smell.

Use Flow to Get a Better Picture

Your sentence beginnings not only help the reader get a better picture of your description, but they also help improve the fluency of the paper. Fluency is the flow of your paper and without varying sentence structure, you will create a chop that makes readers stop. Without a smooth flow, the paper can be uncomfortable to read. In a descriptive paper, the flow of your paper should emulate the item you are describing. Longer sentences with varying beginnings will give a paper a smooth flow. Short, simple sentences create more chop. While you are writing, consider where you want your reader's eyes to go and how often you expect your reader to stop for a breath.

Example sentence structures of descriptive writing in one paragraph

Sentence *1. I felt my excitement building up as I walked towards the door.*

2. It was a gateway to heaven. I couldn't believe it, as I had been counting down to this day for months.

3. The people walking past me from the candy store looked exceedingly pleased, as if all problems in life could be solve by what lay beyond the door.

4. Their faces glowing with delight.

(Adapted from http://www.northbendlibrary.com/descriptive-essay-writing-tips-sentence-structure.php and https://igcse revision.wikispaces.com/Descriptive +Writing

APPENDIX E

Worksheets

Worksheet 1

Identify what you know (known points) and what you don't know (unknown points) about descriptive paragraph writing.

Example

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Known point                   │
│                                          │
│      -A paragraph needs a topic.         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Unknown points                │
│                                          │
│      -What is paragraph writing?         │
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Known points

1………………………………………………………………………………….
2…………………………………………………………………………………..
3………………………………………………………………………………….
4………………………………………………………………………………….
5………………………………………………………………………………….
6………………………………………………………………………………….

Unknown points

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2…………………………………………………………………………………..
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6………………………………………………………………………………….

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Worksheet 2

Identify which paragraph is descriptive and give the reasons

Example

My mother gave me a lemon last summer. Its yellow surface wasbright and sunshiny. It was shaped almost round, but was slightly pointed at each end. Its size was almost as big as a baseball. As I sliced into it, I heard the knife make sharp cutting noises and heard the juice spurt out. I put it to my lips, and the cold wet liquid made me pucker up. My cheeks were drawn together with its bitterness. Its tart and tangy smell almost made my eyes water. As I tasted it, I was sure I had never tasted anything more sour in my entire life. I made up my mind right then and there never to eat another lemon unless it was sugared and in lemonade.

The paragraph above is descriptive paragraph.

The reasons are: It is full of description of an object and senses, such as yellow surface was bright and sunshiny, Its size was almost as big as a baseball, I heard the knife make sharp cutting noises and heard the juice spurt out, Its tart and tangy smell almost made my eyes water.

(Taken from https://www.slideshare.net/spywida/descriptive-paragraph-36939288)

(One)

Brahim has been my intimate friend since we were in the primary school. He's a tall and slim young man with tanned skin and curly dark hair. He has brown small eyes in an oval shiny face. He always wears casual clothes in a very messy way. He is an extroverted person who loves having fun all the time. He's got a great sense of humor and he always makes me laugh. He is a very generous and sensitive person. However, he can be a little tense at times. For example, when someone crosses him, he suddenly becomes very quarrelsome and wild. All in all, I'm satisfied to have such a good person like him as a friend. I really enjoy his company. I never feel bored or sad when I am with him. I'm sure we'll always be intimate friends

(Adapted from http://www.angelfire.com/pro/eng43/brahim.html)

(Two)

All toilet flush tanks work about the same. When the toilet is flushed, the trip handle lifts the tank ball, opening the outlet and letting water flow into the bowl. When the tank is nearly empty, the ball falls back in place over the outlet. The float falls with the water level, opening the water-supply inlet valve just as the outlet is being closed,

and the tank is refilled through the filler tube. Water also flows through the bowl refill tube into the overflow pipe to replenish trap-sealing water. As the water level in the tank nears the top of the overflow pipe, the float closes the inlet valve.

(Taken from https://inspectapedia.com/plumbing/Toilet_Tank_Operation.php)

(Three)

"Here's a true story: I was staying at Ridley's house, and we went to the market for groceries. I was grinding up a bag of coffee when Ridley wandered over. After watching me for a moment, he said: 'A murderer could put poison into the grinding machine, so the next person to use it would grind poison into the bottom of his coffee bag. It could be weeks before the poison got into the coffee. There'd be no way to trace it.' Then, smiling contentedly, he wandered off to buy cold cuts. My host".

(Taken from https://www.thoughtco.com/narrative-composition-term-1691417)

(Four)

Homework is an important part of the learning process in middle school. One reason is thathomework gives students additional practice of skills covered in class. Middle school classes are too shortto teach a new concept and practice it sufficiently for students to master. Students need both guidedpractice in class and independent practice at home. Another reason for homework is that it provides time tocomplete longer assignments. For example, the ideal composition process allows time for students to thinkand to reflect on their ideas, as well as time to revise and to proofread their writing. Also, reports andspecial projects often require research that cannot always be done at school. Students, do your daily homework, make better grades, and learn more.

(Taken from http://www.beaconlearningcenter.com/documents/307_01.pdf)

From the four paragraphs above, the descriptive paragraph is
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The reasons are
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Worksheet 3

Read the text bellow and identify structure of a paragraph

Example

My most valuable possession is an old, slightly warped blond guitar. I taught myself how to play. It's nothing fancy, just a folk guitar. At the top is a bramble of copper-wound strings, each one hooked through the eye of a silver tuning key. The wood worn by years of fingers pressing chords and picking notes. The blond wood has been chipped and gouged to gray, particularly where the pick guard fell off years ago. No, it's not a beautiful instrument, but it still lets me make music, and for that I will always treasure it.

Topic sentence "My most valuable possession is an old, slightly warped blond guitar"

Supporting sentences "I taught myself how to play. It's nothing fancy, just a Madeira folk guitar. At the top is a bramble of copper-wound strings, each one hooked through the eye of a silver tuning key. The wood worn by years of fingers pressing chords and picking notes. The blond wood has been chipped and gouged to gray, particularly where the pick guard fell off years ago"

Concluding sentence "No, it's not a beautiful instrument, but it still lets me make music, and for that I will always treasure it"

(Adapted from https://www.thoughtco.com/model-descriptive-paragraphs-1690573)

(A)

As I was growing up in the 60's, television was the only entertainment myfamily knew of the electronic sort. The 7 o'clock nightly news was such animportant part of our family that my dad knocked a wall down and built a hugecabinet in its place just to accommodate our 19-inch black and white. No onewas allowed to talk or make a sound when the television was on; all eyes wereglued to the moving and flickering image. The box commanded absolute respect. In the daytime, "the television needs its rest" my mother would say, asshe patted its pseudo-wooden top and covered it with a doilie she had made herself. There is no doubt that TV was as central to our lives as it was to thelives of all our friends during that period.

(Taken fromhttp://writesite.athabascau.ca/documentation/Samples%20of%20descriptive%.pdf)

Topic sentence

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Supporting sentence

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Concluding sentence

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(B)

Gregory is my beautiful gray Persian cat. He walks with pride and grace, performing a dance of disdain as he slowly lifts and lowers each paw with the delicacy of a ballet dancer. His pride, however, does not extend to his appearance, for he spends most of his time indoors watching television and growing fat. He enjoys TV commercials, especially those for Meow Mix and 9 Lives. His familiarity with cat food commercials has led him to reject generic brands of cat food in favor of only the most expensive brands. Gregory is as finicky about visitors as he is about what he eats, befriending some and repelling others. He may snuggle up against your ankle, begging to be petted, or he may imitate a skunk and stain your favorite trousers. Gregory does not do this to establish his territory, as many cat experts think, but to humiliate me because he is jealous of my friends. After my guests have fled, I look at the old fleabag snoozing and smiling to himself in front of the television set, and I have to forgive him for his obnoxious, but endearing, habits. That is my Gregory, my beloved gray Persian cat.

(Taken from https://www.slideshare.net/spywida/descriptive-paragraph-36939288)

Topic sentence

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Supporting sentence

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Concluding sentence

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Group……………………………………………….…

Worksheet 4

Coherence and cohesion (transitional devices)

In the passages below, use the words provided in the box to fill in the blank spaces. Think about where each word would fit best. You should use all the words.

Example

> *Since* you're such a good student, you'll get into a good college. *Therefore*, you can get a job you like. *As a result*, you should be a happy person, *because* it's much easier to be happy when you do something you love and make good money.

(Taken from http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-transitional-words-and-phrases.html)

(A)

> However   To sum up
>
> In other words   Moreover   Consequently

Many tourists I have met have told me that one place they have to go is the weekendmarket. This market is huge and has everything from bags, souvenirs and handicrafts to many kinds of animals, many kinds of plants and it also has a variety of local food_____, the weekend market is a great place for shopping and experiencing the local culture_____, it is also near a sky train station which makes it very convenient for city people, especially youngpeople who don't have cars. The market is very large and full of hundreds of small shops and stalls_____, it can be confusing to getaround_____, if you get lost, it is a good idea to look for the clock tower which is right in the middle of themarket_____, a day at the weekend market is both a day of shopping and a unique experience for your senses. It is a kindof magical journey that is great as a first experience for tourists and an escape from daily life for locals., while it is usually hot and crowded, the atmosphere is friendly and good-natured .(Taken from http://www.eslflow.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Weekend_market_descriptive_essay_exercise___answers_.pdf)

(B)

In addition	Furthermore	Overall though
For example	Moreover	However

An Important Possession

If I have to choose one thing that is important in my life, it is my notebook computer. It is anAcer notebook running Windows 7. It's a fairly cheap notebook that I bought about four years ago. It's black and thin and has rounded edges that are soft and smooth when you pick it up. It's also light enough for me to carry in my backpack_____, it can do nearly everything I need it to do_____, I can create documents, design new pages on my website, make recordings and download TV shows. _____to many files I have saved for my work, it contains a lot of photos and music_____, it is not a perfect computer. It crashed a few years ago and since then it's been much slower. _____ it has downloaded some programs that I hate. I don't know how to get rid of them_____, this computer is pretty reliable, convenient and allows me to work anywhere I go.

(Taken from https://ieltsfocus.com/2017/07/20/cohesive-devices-in-ielts/)

Group …………………………………………..……

Worksheet 5

Paragraph unity

Read the paragraphs below and indicate which number of sentences of each paragraph is irrelevant. There 2 are irrelevant sentences in each paragraph.

Example

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(1) Rain forests, such as those in South America and Africa, contain more plant and animal species than does any other area in the world. **(2)** For example, more bird species have been identified in a wildlife preserve in Peru than in the entire United States. **(3)** If habitat is not protected, the bird species will eventually vanish. **(4)** At least 700 different tree species have been found in one forest in Borneo. **(5)** That same number exists in the whole of North America. **(6)** One river in Brazil contains more species of fish than all the rivers and lakes in the United States together. **(7)** If nothing is done to prevent these rain forests from being cleared, untold numbers of plants and animal species will certainly become extinct.

The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are *4 and 5*
(The main idea of this paragraph is about rain forests in South America and Africa but sentence 4 and 5 mention Borneo.

(Taken from ptfaculty.gordonstate.edu/.../Paragraph%20Unity%20Exercises.docx)

(One)

(1)My best friend Dave is the most brilliant student in our school. (2)He is a tall young boy. (3)He looks slim and too frail for his age. (4)He has an oval face with long straight black hair and small blue eyes. (5) He has 2 lovely kittens; their names are Katty and Katton. (6)He does not like math and chemistry. (7)He puts on glasses. (8)He always looks elegant and comfortable in his casual clothes, jeans and T-shirts. (9) He doesn't care much about fashion. (10)My friend Dave is an easy-going and an extroverted person; still, he is the smartest of us all.

The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are

_____

(Taken from http://www.geocities.ws/bac/writing/descriptive.html)

(Two)

(1)Lake Calhoun is a great place to swim and relax. (2) In the summer, the water is warm and clean, and the beaches are large enough to accommodate groups of people seeking relief from a midsummer scorcher. (3) In addition to swimming, visitors to the lake can go canoeing, sailing, windsurfing, or fishing. (4)The blue water is a refreshing, tempting sight. The sweet scent of sun block wafts through the air from sunbathers lying on the beach.(5) Children laugh and splash in the water, and nearby volleyball games stir passionate shouts in the heat of competition. (6)There are many types of wild animals can be found here. (7) Some of them are claimed to be almost extinct in the near future. (8) Meanwhile lifeguards sit atop their towers and make sure everyone is safe. (9)In the distance, sail boats catch the soft breezes that cross the lake and canoeists glide quietly past. (10) This is what summer is all about!

The numbers of the irrelevant sentences are

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(Taken from
https://www.learnamericanenglishonline.com/Write_in_English/WL11_descriptive_paragraphs. html)

Group ………………………………………….

Worksheet 6

Descriptive sentence structure

Example

1. My kindergarten teacher is beautiful and kind.

2. Her wonderful smile attracts me and everyone around her.

(Taken from https://expandinglanguage.wordpress.com/2011/10/13/describing-the-classroom/)

Look at each picture and write 2 descriptive sentences.

(A)

1……………………………………………………………………………………………

2……………………………………………………………………………………………

(Taken from https://www.123rf.com/photo_14233962_two-cute-cartoon-children-are-running-with-kites-on-the-beach-summer-holiday-illustration-for-kids.html)

(B)

1…………………………………………………………………………………………………

2…………………………………………………………………………………………………

(Taken fromhttps://www.wikihow.com/Describe-a-Color-to-a-Blind-Person)

(C)

1…………………………………………………………………………………………………

2…………………………………………………………………………………………………

(Taken from http://english3bg.blogspot.com/2015/10/describing-photo.html)

(D)

1..

2..

(Taken from https://www.oglesby.il.us/?cat=12)

(E)

1..

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(Taken from http://english.eagetutor.com/beginner-s-english/beginner-s-english/vocabulary-related-to-describing-food)

Group……………………………………….……..

Worksheet 7

Draft 1

Write a descriptive paragraph of 100-120 words.

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Group ……………………………………

Score obtained………………………………

Assessed by group…………………………..

Comment…………………………………………………………………………………
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Draft 2

Write a descriptive paragraph of 100-120 words.

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Draft 3

Write a descriptive paragraph of 100-120 words.

Title…………………………………

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APPENDIX F

Scoring rubric for descriptive paragraph (Peer evaluation)

	Need attention (1 point)	Fair (2 points)	Good (3 points)	Excellent (4 points)
Mechanics	More than 10 spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes	5-9 spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes	Less than 5 spelling punctuation or grammar mistakes	No spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes
Details	Topic is not clear and the details are not related to the topic.	Topic is quite clear but the details are not related to the topic.	Topic is complete and clear. Most details are related to the topic.	Topic is complete and clear, all details are related to the topic.
Word choice	Few sentences describe something through word choice.	Some sentences describe something through word choice.	Most sentences describe something through word choice, makes it almost detailed.	Each sentence describes something through word choice, makes it seem real. In other words, it is vivid, colorful, and detailed.
Transition	Very difficult to follow. No transitional words are used.	Sentences do not flow smoothly, difficult to follow. 1 or 2 transitional words are used.	Sentences flow smoothly quite easy to follow. 3-4 transitional words are used.	Sentences flow very smooth and easy to follow. More than 4 transitional words are used.
Descriptive	Only 1 or 2 adjectives are used.	3-5 adjectives are used.	6-8 descriptive adjectives are used.	More than 8 descriptive adjectives are effectively used.

Adapted from Devised by grade 4 Victoria Village students and Teaching English 4 All and https://sites.google.com/a/lunenburgschools.net/thms_witham/roastin-for-reading/word-choice-rubric

Rubric for descriptive paragraph (Self-evaluation)

	Need attention (1 point)	Fair (2 points)	Good (3 points)	Excellent (4 points)
Mechanics	More than 10 spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes	5-9 spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes	Less than 5 spelling punctuation or grammar mistakes	No spelling, punctuation or grammar mistakes
Details	Topic is not clear and the details are not related to the topic.	Topic is quite clear but the details are not related to the topic.	Topic is complete and clear. Most details are related to the topic.	Topic is complete and clear, all details are related to the topic.
Word choice	Few sentences describe something through word choice.	Some sentences describe something through word choice.	Most sentences describe something through word choice, makes it almost detailed.	Each sentence describes something through word choice, makes it seem real. In other words, it is vivid, colorful, and detailed.
Transition	Very difficult to follow. No transitional words are used.	Sentences do not flow smoothly, difficult to follow. 1 or 2 transitional words are used.	Sentences flow smoothly quite easy to follow. 3-4 transitional words are used.	Sentences flow very smooth and easy to follow. More than 4 transitional words are used.
Descriptive	Only 1 or 2 adjectives are used.	3-5 adjectives are used.	6-8 descriptive adjectives are used.	More than 8 descriptive adjectives are effectively used.

Adapted from Devised by grade 4 Victoria Village students and Teaching English 4 All and https://sites.google.com/a/lunenburgschools.net/thms_witham/roastin-for-reading/word-choice-rubric

Rubric for descriptive paragraph writing (Teacher: For writing tests assessment)

	Excellent (4points)	Good (3 points)	Fair (2 points)	Need attention (1point)
Structure of a paragraph including Topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding sentence	**Topic sentence**: Interesting, original topic sentence, reflecting thought and insight; focusing on one interesting main idea. **Supporting sentences:** Interesting, concrete and full of descriptive examples and details with explanations that relate to the topic. **Concluding sentence**: Repeating key words from the topic sentence.	**Topic sentence:** Clearly stated topic sentence, presenting one main idea **Supporting sentences:** Examples and details relate to the topic and some explanation is included. **Concluding sentence:** Some key words from the topic sentence are missing.	**Topic sentence:** Acceptable, presenting one idea**.** **Supporting sentences:** Sufficient number of examples and details that relate to the topic **Concluding sentence:** Not clear and not repeating the keywords from the topic sentence.	**Topic sentence:** Missing, invalid, or inappropriate topic sentence; missing main idea **Supporting sentences:** Insufficient, vague, or undeveloped examples. **Concluding sentence:** There is no concluding statement at the end of the paragraph.
Paragraph organization (transition words)	Transition words have been frequently and effectively used to connect ideas.	Some transition words have been used to connect ideas.	An attempt has been made to use transition words although they have not been properly used.	No transition words are used.
Descriptive writing	Juicy words describe the topic and support most of the five senses.	Some juicy words describe the topic and support some of the five senses.	An attempt at juicy words is made to describe the five senses. However, the "sense" is not developed	Few juicy words are used
Paragraph unity	Each idea in the paragraph relates directly to the topic sentence.	Most ideas in the paragraph relate directly to the topic sentence.	Some ideas in the paragraph relate to the topic sentence.	Few ideas in the paragraph are connected.
Sentence structure of descriptive writing	Each sentence describes something through word choice, makes it seem real. In other words, it is vivid, colorful, and detailed. It is clear and concise. The meaning is made clear through the words used.	Most sentences describe something through word choice, makes it almost detailed. There may be a little confusion, but most of the writing makes sense and the word choice is ordinary.	Some sentences describe something through word choice. The word choice causes confusion. Words used improperly, repetitive and boring	Few sentences describe something through word choice. The reader will feel lost. The writing does not make sense.

Adapted from
https://www.mesacc.edu/~paoih30491/RubricParagraphAssignment.htmlandhttps://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?sp=yes&code=JX39XBX& and
https://sites.google.com/a/lunenburgschools.net/thms_witham/roastin-for-reading/word-choice-rubric

APPENDIX G

Pre and post writing tests

Write a descriptive paragraph of 100-120 words.

"My favorite English classroom environment"

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Name……………………………..class…………………. Scored obtained ………

APPENDIX H

Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at investigating students' perceptions toward the use ofproblem-based learning in writing descriptive paragraph. This also includes suggestions and comments for PBL. Please answer the following questions.

Part 1: Students' perceptions toward learning writing descriptive paragraph throughproblem-based learning (PBL)

Instructions: Put a tick (/) in the box which best matches your perception
.
5 = strongly agree 4 = agree 3 = neutral 2 = disagree 1 = strongly disagree

Aspects to be investigated	1	2	3	4	5
A. Knowledge gained and writing improvement					
1. I have developed paragraph writing skill.					
2. I have developed descriptive paragraph writing skill.					
3. I have acquired new knowledge from class discussion.					
4. I have gained various kinds of knowledge about writing such as word choice, sentence structure, and so on.					
5. I have developed thinking skills, such as thinking reasonably and systematically.					
6. I have developed self-directed learning skill.					
7. I have developed cooperative learning skill.					
B. Effectiveness of the PBL unit					
8. Numbers of materials provided by teacher, such as handouts and worksheets were adequate.					
9. The number of problems were appropriate.					
10. The amount in handouts was reasonable.					
11. Teaching and learning steps were arranged systematically.					
12. The evaluation was appropriate.					

Aspects to be investigated	1	2	3	4	5
13. Time spent for PBL was sufficient.					
C. Self-study					
14. I could select reading materials by myself.					
15. I could solve any difficulties by myself.					
16. I did not need the teacher's help.					
D. Working in groups					
17. I could work well with others.					
18. I have been open to others' opinions.					
19. Different English proficiency of group members did not affect my learning.					
20. I could work in group better than work individually.					

Adapted from Sojisirikul, P. (2009)

Part 2 Suggestions/comments

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แบบสอบถาม

        แบบสอบถามนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจทัศนคติของนักเรียนที่มีต่อการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน เพื่อเรียนรู้วิธีการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษแบบบรรยาย รวมถึงข้อเสนอแนะและความคิดเห็นอื่นๆ ขอให้นักเรียนตอบคำถามดังต่อไปนี้

ตอนที่ 1 ทัศนคติของนักเรียนที่มีต่อการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน

คำสั่ง:กรุณาทำเครื่องหมายถูก (/) หน้าข้อที่ตรงกับความเป็นจริงหรือความรู้สึกของนักเรียนมากที่สุด
5 = เห็นด้วยมากที่สุด 4 = เห็นด้วย 3 = ปานกลาง 2 = ไม่เห็นด้วย 1 = ไม่เห็นด้วยมากที่สุด

ด้านความรู้ที่ได้รับและพัฒนาการทางด้านการเขียน	1	2	3	4	5
ความรู้และพัฒนาการในด้านการเขียน					
1. ฉันได้พัฒนาทักษะการเขียนย่อหน้า					
2. ฉันได้พัฒนาทักษะการเขียนย่อหน้าแบบบรรยาย					
3. ฉันได้เรียนรู้สิ่งใหม่ๆจากการอภิปรายในห้องเรียน					
4. ฉันได้ความรู้ที่หลากหลายเกี่ยวกับการเขียน เช่น การเลือกใช้คำ โครงสร้างประโยค และอื่นๆ					
5. ฉันมีพัฒนาการด้านความคิดเช่นคิดอย่างมีเหตุผล, คิดอย่างมีระบบ					
6. ฉันมีพัฒนาการด้านทักษะการเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง					
7. ฉันมีพัฒนาการด้านทักษะการเรียนรู้ร่วมกันกับผู้อื่น					
ประสิทธิภาพของการใช้โจทย์ปัญหา					
8. จำนวนเอกสารประกอบการเรียนที่จัดเตรียมโดยครูผู้สอน เช่น เอกสาร และแบบฝึกหัดท้ายบทนั้นเพียงพอ					
9. จำนวนโจทย์ปัญหานั้นเพียงพอ					
10. เนื้อหาในใบความรู้เพียงพอ					

ด้านความรู้ที่ได้รับและพัฒนาการทางด้านการเขียน	1	2	3	4	5
11. ขั้นตอนการเรียนการสอนเป็นไปอย่างมีระบบ					
12. วิธีการวัดผลการเรียนมีความเหมาะสม					
13. ระยะเวลาที่ใช้ในการเรียนรู้โดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐานนั้นเพียงพอ					
การเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง					
14. ฉันสามารถเลือกใบความรู้ด้วยตนเองได้					
15. ฉันสามารถแก้ไขปัญหาต่างๆด้วยตนเองได้					
16. ฉันไม่ต้องการความช่วยเหลือจากครูผู้สอน					
การทำงานเป็นกลุ่ม					
17. ฉันสามารถทำงานร่วมกับผู้อื่นได้					
18. ฉันยอมรับฟังความคิดเห็นของคนอื่น					
19. ความแตกต่างทางด้านความสามารถภาษาอังกฤษของสมาชิกในกลุ่ม ไม่ส่งผลต่อการเรียนรู้ของฉัน					
20. ฉันสามารถทำงานเป็นกลุ่มได้ดีกว่าทำงานคนเดียว					

ตอนที่ 2 ข้อเสนอแนะ / ความคิดเห็น

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APPENDIX I

Interview

The semi-structured interview aims at investigating factors affecting students' learning writing descriptive paragraph in problem-based learning approach.

Questions.

1. Do you like to learn through PBL and why?

2. Are there any difficulties in learning through PBL?

   2.1 What do you think about the problems given by teacher?

   2.2 What do you thinkabout the materials provided by teacher?

   2.3 What do you think about the exercises after the lessons?

3. Have you developed your descriptive writing skills? What helped you developed?

แบบสัมภาษณ์

แบบสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งมีโครงสร้างนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อการเรียนการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษแบบบรรยายโดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน

คำถาม

1. คุณชอบการเรียนโดยวิธีการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐานหรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด?

2. คุณประสบกับปัญหาเมื่อครูผู้สอนใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐานหรือไม่?
    2.1   คุณคิดอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับโจทย์ปัญหาที่จัดเตรียมโดยครูผู้สอน?
    2.2   คุณคิดอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับเอกสารประกอบการเรียนที่จัดเตรียมโดยครูผู้สอน?
    2.3   คุณคิดอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับแบบฝึกหัดท้ายบท?

3. คุณได้พัฒนาทักษะการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษแบบบรรยายหรือไม่? และอะไรทำให้ทักษะการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษแบบบรรยายได้รับการพัฒนา?

PAPER 1

The Effects of Problem-Based Learning on Improving High School Students' English Writing Ability

The Effects of Problem-Based Learning on Improving High School Students' English Writing Ability

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Abstract

The current study aims to compare the differences between two teaching methods, problem-based learning (PBL) teaching method and non-problem-based learning teaching method on improving Matthayomsuksa 6 students' writing ability and factors affecting their learning through PBL approach. The participants of this study were 80 students at a school in Yala, southern Thailand. They were divided into an experimental group and a controlled group of 40 participants each. The experimental group received PBL approach, while the controlled group received traditional teaching approach. The research instruments included two sets of lesson plans, identical pre and post writing tests, scoring rubrics were provided by the researcher and semi-structured interview. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The findings showed that after the treatment, there was significant difference between the mean scores of posttest of the experimental group (M=13.55, SD=1.95) and that of the controlled group (M=11.80, SD=1.40). The effect size was discovered (1.10). The semi-structured interview results revealed that working with others, help of a teacher and relevancy of the problem were as key supporting factors in learning through PBL. While obstructing factors were confusion of PBL process and roles of the students and the teacher, medium of instruction, deficiency of English and difficulty of the problem. The findings of this study suggested that PBL can be implemented to develop English writing ability not only in undergraduate level and ESL context as found by previous studies (Sojisirikul, 2009, Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015) but also in EFL high school students with careful considerations of involving factors.

Keywords: Problem-based learning, descriptive paragraph writing, traditional teaching method

Introduction

English writing skill is considered one of the most difficult language skills not only for English as second language (ESL) learners but also for English as foreign language (EFL) learners (Phuket, 2015). A writer is required to have syntactic, semantic, rhetorical, and discourse knowledge in order to produce a well-constructed text which can help readers understand the meaning clearly (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). In EFL classroom, many researchers agree that students have problems in writing paragraphs. Lack of adequate language proficiency, lack of knowledge of differences in vocabulary and structures between the target language and their first language are the main factors affecting their ability in writing English paragraphs (Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007).

Teaching writing is one of the most challenging tasks for English instructors since it is extremely time consuming. Effective teaching writing takes time; it requires time for students to share ideas and

complete writing tasks and time for teachers to evaluate. In teaching paragraph writing, teachers should consider what the students are interested to write. (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998).

The teacher of English writing needs to seek effective ways of teaching in order to help students become active learners. One useful teaching method is problem-based learning (PBL). It is a student-centered learning approach based on sociocultural theory which believes that students will learn well when they interact with others (Lantolf & Thorne 2005) and constructivism learning theory which believes that students can construct new knowledge by themselves with the support from the expert (Duffy, Lowyck & Jonassen 1993). It is a teaching approach that allows students to learn while being engaged in problem solving activities. The learning takes place when learning is in a small group (Lange & Costley, 2014). They have chances to find different information and share language skills that can make them acquire knowledge through the problem. Interaction and communication through listening, speaking and writing with others in the group happen, and students' ideas can be developed (Antepohl & Herzig, 1999). PBL approach also emphasizes self and peer assessment. Students are required to evaluate their own and others' works and are encouraged to communicate with others (Patrick & McPhee, 2014).

In employing PBL, the teacher has to understand the characteristics of PBL and the roles of the teacher and the students in a writing class in order to obtain effective outcomes. The problem to be used in the PBL class is very important. When expecting positive outcomes, the teacher should carefully find the real-world problem that students are facing in their lives (Tan, 2003). PBL has been employed in many disciplines including language education in both ESL and EFL contexts. Many previous studies have adapted it as a tool for developing students' English skills, such as reading, speaking and writing, and the outcomes were satisfied (Gijbels, Dochy, Segers, & Van Den Bossche, 2005). In relation to the writing skill, PBL is found to be frequently employed at undergraduate level (Sojisirikul, 2009). A limited number of studies focused on high school level (Othman & Shah, 2013; Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015) possibly because students are considered having low proficiency of English.

PBL process-oriented can be employed in teaching writing as well. It can be blended into five main steps of PBL (Tan, 2003; Sojisirikul, 2009; Sobary, 2012). The first step is to introduce the characteristic problem-based learning and roles of students and a teacher when involving PBL class. The second step is to present the problem which is based on students' real life to stimulate solutions of the problem. Students are asked to brainstorm, share their background knowledge, ideas and opinions among the groups, (Hatmanto, 2012). The third step is peer-teaching. Students are asked share the learning content about the problem they have found. While they are gathering and exchanging information of writing, they are able to acquire new knowledge of writing. The fourth step is presentation of writing in which they are assigned to write the first draft, revise, refine their writing in groups. Students are asked to have self- evaluation and produce the second draft of writing. Then, students are asked to perform peer assessment to assess other groups' work. Then, the students write the final draft of writing. The last step is to evaluate progress. They are asked to evaluate their own tasks in groups in accordance with the learning objectives given by the teacher (Sojisirikul, 2009; Sobary, 2012).

Research objectives

    1.   To investigate the effects of problem-based learning approach on Mathayomsuksa 6 students' descriptive paragraph writing ability

    2.   To investigate factors affecting Mathayomsuksa 6 students' learning through PBL approach

Research questions

1. Are there any differences between Matthayonsuksa 6 students' descriptive writing ability in problem-based learning group and non-problem-based learning group? If yes, what are they?

2. What factors affecting students' learning through problem-based learning?

Research hypothesis

1. The participants in PBL group outperform the non-PBL group.

2. There are supporting and obstructing factors found in PBL classroom.

Research methodology

1. Participants

This research is a quasi- experimental study including one experimental group and one controlled group. The participants were eighty Mattayomsuksa 6 students in two intact classes at a school in Yala province. One intact class of 40 participants were randomly assigned into an experimental group learning through problem-based learning method and the other intact class of 40 participants were assigned into a controlled group taught through traditional teaching method.

2. Research instruments

2.1 Lesson plans

The experimental and the controlled groups were taught using different sets of lesson plans: PBL and non-PBL lesson plans. Both sets of the lesson plans shared the same learning content which was English descriptive paragraph writing. The writing aspects of descriptive paragraph focused were part of a paragraph, transition words, descriptive writing, paragraph unity and descriptive sentence structure. The PBL lesson plans were designed based on five steps of PBL teaching process including 1) Introduction of PBL 2) Presentation of problem 3) Peer teaching 4) Presentation of writing and 5) Evaluation progress. In contrast, the non-PBL lesson plans were designed to be taught deductively by the teacher in a traditional pattern; that is, the teacher explained characteristics of descriptive paragraph writing. Then they were asked to produce one writing task individually.

2.2 Pre and post writing tests

The pre and post writing tests were identical. The topic was *"My favorite English classroom environment"*. The participants in both groups were asked to write individually in 80 minutes in order to measure their writing performance before and after receiving the treatment.

2.3 Scoring rubrics

The scoring rubrics used to evaluate quality of students' pretest and posttest were invented by the researcher. Five aspects of descriptive paragraph writing, namely, parts of a paragraph, transition words, descriptive writing, paragraph unity and sentence structure of descriptive writing. These five aspects were evaluated using marking rubrics. Two raters including the researcher and a teacher who received a Master's degree in TESOL and has seven- year teaching experience scored the tests for both groups. The reliability in scoring the writing tests of both raters reached 0.869 for the pretest and 0.894 for the posttest.

2.4 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview was used to collect qualitative data about the factors affecting students' learning in PBL classroom. The interview included six open-ended questions asking about the

factors they found while participating in PBL classroom. Twenty participants interviewed were randomly selected from the experimental group.

3. Data collection procedures

The overall research procedure includes three phases: 1) pre-treatment process, 2) treatment process, and 3) post-treatment process.

At the pre-treatment process, the participants in both groups were asked to take the pre-test individually. Then they were taught separately by the researcher following the lesson plans designed for each group.

In the treatment process of the PBL group, the participants were given the introduction of PBL approach and roles of teacher and students. Then, the teacher presented the problem and the participants were asked to work in group to discuss their known and unknown points about the problem. Then, they were asked to select reading sources provided by the teacher, gave peer teaching and shared their knowledge about writing. After that, they were asked to compose one writing task in groups and evaluated their first draft, revised and composed the second and final drafts. Finally, they were asked to evaluate their own writing.

For non PBL group, the teacher explained and taught participants deductively about how to write descriptive paragraph. This group of participants learned without the problem. The handouts used were also provided by the teacher but the students were asked to learn individually. Then, the participants were asked to write one writing task of descriptive paragraph and revised it individually. Their writings were then evaluated by the teacher.

In the post-treatment process, the participants in both groups were asked to take the post-test individually. Then only the participants in the PBL group were asked to interview.

4. Findings

4.1 The results of writing test performance of PBL and non-PBL group

The results reveal the differences between the pretest and posttests scores of the participants in both groups as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Comparison of test scores between PBL and non-PBL groups.

Group		Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	p-value	Cohen's d
Pretest	Experimental (n=40)	10.13	1.38	.420	78	.675	
	Controlled (n=40)	10.25	1.28				
Posttest	Experimental (n=40)	13.55	1.95	4.615	70.80	.000*	1.10
	Controlled (n=40)	11.80	1.40				

*significant at 0.01 level

Table 1 shows the mean scores of pretest of the experimental group (*M*=10.13, SD=1.38) and those of the controlled group (*M*=10.25, SD=1.28). It indicates that there was no significant difference between the two groups (*t*=.420, *p*=.675). In other words, the two groups were not significantly different in writing descriptive paragraph ability before the experiment.

After the experiment, the results reveal that the mean scores of the experimental group (*M*=13.55, SD=1.95) was higher than those of the controlled group (*M*=11.80, SD=1.40). A significant

difference between the two groups (t=4.615, p=.00) was found. Further, the effect size value indicates a very large practical significance (d=1.10).

4.2   Factors affecting students' learning through PBL

The results from the semi-structure interview reveal that there were factors affecting students' learning though PBL approach. The particular results are as shown in Table 3.

Table 2 Factors affecting students' learning through PBL

NO.	CATEGORIES	ASPECTS	STATEMENTS
1	Supporting factors	-Working with others	I think I can learn better in a group because I can share and learn from others. (Respondent 2)
		-Help of a teacher	Personally, I think the help of the teacher made it easy to understand the learning contents. (Respondent 19)
		-Relevancy of the problem	One factor that made me learn better is that the problem given by the teacher. It was relevant and interesting for me. (Respondent 11)
2	Obstructing factors	-Confusion of PBL process	I think I was confused about the role of the members in the group and the teacher's role. I did not know when to work by myself and when I can ask for help from the teacher. (Respondent 3)
		-Medium of instruction	Sometimes I did not understand teacher's explanation. It made me misunderstand some points. (Respondent 16)
		-Language deficiency	The teacher encouraged me and the members in my group to discuss in English. I feel like I could not do that and misunderstanding always occurred while discussion in group. (Respondent 13)
		-Difficulty of the problem	I feel like the problem given by the teacher was too difficult for Matthayomsuksa 6 students. Because I have never studied writing like this before. I could have learned better if the problem was easier than this. (Respondent 12)

Table 2 above reveals numbers of factors supporting and obstructing participants' learning inproblem- based learning approach. For the supporting factors, the participants viewed that they could learn well when learning with friends. Another supporting factor was help of a teacher. They pointed out that the teacher could help them understand the contents. They also commented that the problem given by the teacher was relevant to them and could help them learn better. For the obstructing factors, the participants viewed that they were confused about their roles and the teacher's role and about the process of PBL. Also, they viewed that they did not understand what the teacher explained in English very well. They also claimed that they had problems with English discussion in groups and some misunderstanding always happened. The last obstructing factor was difficulty of the problem. The participants agreed that the problem given by the teacher was too difficult for them because they never learned through this method before.

Discussion

The results from writing tests reveal that the PBL group outperformed the non-PBL group. This is possibly because the participants in the PBL group were able to share their knowledge with their peers when working in groups. Also, they were facilitated by the teacher to construct knowledge. This finding can be supported by sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne 2005) and constructivism learning theory (Duffy, Lowyck & Jonassen 1993) which believes that the students can learn better when learning in a small group where they are guided and instructed by the teacher or instructor.

The results from the interviews reveal an interesting finding about the PBL problem. Some participants found that the relevancy of problems to them tends to help them learn. This point appears to cohere with Gwee (2008) and Alajmi (2014) who asserted that students could learn well if the problem provided by teacher is relevant, authentic and interesting for students to solve

Regarding obstructing factors, the participants perceived that confusion of PBL process and role of the students and the teacher were problems in their learning. They did not know what to do in some steps of the PBL process and they did not know how much the teacher could do in PBL class. As suggested by Gwee (2008), to succeed in adopting PBL in an EFL context and expect high outcomes, teachers need to comprehend the process of PBL clearly in order to expect high educational outcomes that can be gained from PBL curriculum. Another concerning obstructing factor was medium of instruction used by the teacher. Since the teacher in this study used English as a sole medium of instruction, the participants admitted that they sometimes did not understand the teacher's explanation because the teacher always explained in English. This made them get lost at some points. They also claimed that they could not converse in English when participating PBL classroom and they had a lot of misunderstanding, though, the teacher tried to encourage them to speak English when discussing in the group. Another possible explanation for this, because the students always used their native language with their peers who shared their mother tongue because they felt more comfortable (Al Nakhalah, 2016).

Conclusion

As found in this study, problem-based learning is an effective teaching method. It cannot only be utilized in ESL context and undergraduate level but also in EFL context and lower level of education where students are considered low intermediate.

However, some limitations were found by the researcher while conducting this research. Firstly,

some students were confused by PBL process, making them tended to depend on only the head of the group. Secondly, some handouts prepared by the teacher were too difficult for the students to understand because they were not able to access learning resources through the internet or the library at school. Lastly, the participants' lack of an ability to discuss in English made them experience problem in group discussion.

Recommendations

1. Students should be clearly instructed about the role of each person in the group and learning process of PBL while participating PBL class as recommended by Kinnunen, P. & Malmi, L. (2005).
2. The learning sources for students to learn should be searched and collected by themselves, in order to promote self-directed and long-life learning.
3. If students have difficulty in accessing learning resources, the teacher should prepare the most appropriate resources for the students.
4. If the students are not proficient in English, students' native language should be used in some steps of learning in PBL. For example, teacher explanation of PBL process, roles of students and a teacher, introduction of PBL and group discussion to make them more confident to discuss and share knowledge among the group members.

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PAPER 2

Thai EFL Students' Perceptions toward Learning English Descriptive

Paragraph Writing through Problem-Based Learning

Thai EFL Students' Perceptions toward Learning English Descriptive Paragraph Writing through Problem-Based Learning

ทัศนคติของนักเรียนในบริบทที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศที่มีต่อการเรียนการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษแบบบรรยายโดยใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน

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Abstract

The current study aims to investigate Matthayomsuksa 6 students' perceptions toward learning English descriptive paragraph writing through problem-based learning (PBL) approach. The participants of this study were 40 participants at a school in Yala. The research instruments included questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed for arithmetic mean and interpreted using descriptive analysis. The qualitative data from the semi-structured interview were analyzed using content analysis. The results revealed that overall the participants had good perceptions toward learning descriptive paragraph writing through PBL approach ($\bar{x}$=3.45). When considering each domain, the results revealed that the most highly rated domain was knowledge gained and writing improvement ($\bar{x}$=3.54). The least rated domain were identical, self-study and working in group ($\bar{x}$=3.40). The open-ended questions and semi-structured interview results revealed that the students had mixed perceptions toward PBL. The students perceived that PBL was not only helpful for developing their writing ability but also communicative and cooperative learning skills since PBL offered them an opportunity to exchange their different knowledge with their peers through group discussion

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and focused tasks with facilitation of the teacher. However, some negative perceptions were discovered. Some students found that time allocation provided by the teacher was not adequate to complete their task, and the problem and the handouts were too difficult for them as PBL was likely a new writing concept for the students. In addition, differences English proficiency of members in a group affected their learning outcomes. The findings suggest that PBL can be implemented to develop Thai EFL students' English descriptive writing ability with careful considerations of involving factors.

Keywords: Problem-based learning, descriptive paragraph writing, student perception

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้คือเพื่อทัศนะคติของผู้เรียนที่มีต่อการเรียนการเขียนเรียนโดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยนี้ ได้แก่ นักเรียนจำนวน 40 คนจากโรงเรียนในจังหวัดยะลา เครื่องมือวิจัยที่ใช้ ได้แก่ แบบแบบสอบถาม และสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ข้อมูลวิจัยที่ได้วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณ และคุณภาพ และอธิบายในรูปแบบบรรยายผลของการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล พบว่าผู้เรียนมีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อการเรียนการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษแบบบรรยายโดยใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน ($\bar{x}$=3.45) เมื่อพิจารณาถึงทัศนะคติแต่ละด้านพบว่า ด้านที่ผู้เรียนมีทัศนะคติที่ดีที่สุดคือ ความรู้ที่ได้ และพัฒนาการณ์ด้านการเขียน ($\bar{x}$=3.54) ด้านที่ผู้เรียนมีทัศนะคติที่น้อยที่สุดคือ การเรียนรู้ด้วยตนเอง และการทำงานเป็นกลุ่ม ($\bar{x}$=3.40)) ผลของแบบสอบถามแบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง และแบบสัมภาษณ์ พบว่า ผู้เรียนมีทัศนะคติที่แตกต่างกัน ผู้เรียนเห็นด้วยว่า การเรียนรู้โดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน ไม่ได้แค่ช่วยให้ผู้เรียนมีพัฒนาการณ์ในด้านการเขียนเท่านั้น แต่ยังรวมถึงทักษะด้านการสื่อสารและการทำงานเป็นกลุ่มอีกด้วย เนื่องจากผู้เรียนมีโอกาสในการแลกเปลี่ยนความรู้ที่แตกต่างกันระหว่างผู้เรียนด้วยกันผ่านการอภิปราย และงานที่ได้รับมอบหมายด้วยความช่วยเหลือจากผู้สอน อย่างไรก็ตาม ทัศนะคติในด้านลบได้แก่ เวลาที่ใช้การเรียนไม่เพียงพอต่อการเรียนการเขียนปัญหา และเอกสารประกอบการเรียนยากสำหรับนักเรียน เนื่องจากการเรียนรู้โดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐานเป็นรูปแบบการสอนแบบใหม่ และความแตกต่างทางด้านภาษาอังกฤษของสมาชิกในกลุ่มส่งผลต่อการเรียนของนักเรียนในกลุ่ม ผลของวิจัยเล่มนี้สรุปได้ว่าการเรียนรู้โดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐานสามารถนำมาใช้ในการสอนเพื่อการพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนไม่ใช่เฉพาะระดับอุดมศึกษา และบริบทที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาที่สองเท่านั้น (Sojisirikul, 2009, Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015) แต่ยังรวมถึงระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนปลาย ในบริบทที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ แต่อาจจะต้องพิจารณาให้ถี่ถ้วนเกี่ยวกับปัจจัยที่อาจจะส่งผลต่อการเรียนรู้โดยวิธีการสอนนี้

คำหลัก

การเรียนรู้โดยการใช้ปัญหาเป็นฐาน การเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษแบบบรรยาย ทัศนะคติของนักเรียน

Introduction

As writing in English is one important language skill in the 21th century, students have to express themselves in English writing to build relationships with foreigners and people all around the world. One of the substantial writing types which students are required to write is descriptive writing because it is used to describe objects, events and experiences for the readers to understand clearly (Namasivayam, Singh, Mostafa, Janoory & Abdullah, 2017). Thus, teaching and learning how to write descriptive paragraph is important.

To be proficient writers, students are required to learn and be taught how to produce effective paragraph writing (Daneshvari & Davoudi, 2016). A paragraph is the combination of a group of sentences on one topic or main idea. Writing a paragraph requires a sense of organization. The ideas and sentences should be organized clearly and coherently. To write a paragraph coherently, a writer should construct sentences that are related to each other in terms of content and grammatical structure. He or she should also make them flow with a smooth transition. From these requirements, constructing a paragraph is not a straightforward task, and it can cause difficulties for writers.

In EFL classroom, many researchers agree that students have problems in writing paragraphs. A lack of adequate language proficiency and lack of knowledge of differences in vocabulary and structures between the target language and their first language are the main factors affecting the students' ability in writing English paragraph (Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007; Bootchuy, 2008; Jenwitheesuk, 2009; Benchachinda, 2012; Nonkukhetkhong, 2013; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013).

Apart from the problems based on students' knowledge, another factor affecting students' poor writing could be the teaching methods used by teachers (Alami, 2016). In class, teachers mostly play a leading role of giving knowledge. This method seems to be one-way learning process in which students are passive and rely more on teachers. The traditional teaching method, grammar translation is now considered a method that cannot improve communicative ability (Horst, 2003).

One effective teaching method recommended by many previous researchers is problem-based learning (PBL). PBL is a teaching approach that allows students to learn while being engaged in a problem-solving process. It is a student-centered learning approach based on sociocultural theory (Amerian, Ahmadian & Mehri, 2014) and constructivism learning theory (Mvududu & Burgess, 2012) which believes that students will learn well when they learn in a small group to interact with others and they can construct new knowledge by

themselves with the facilitation from the expert. The learning environment takes place in a small group of 4-5 members (Lange, Costley & Han, 2016). The members in the group have an opportunity to discover different information and exchange language skills that can make them obtain understanding of the knowledge. In English learning, PBL has been applied in various aspects, including learning vocabulary, reading, listening speaking and writing (Gijbels, et al, 2005; Sojisirikul & Siriyothin, 2010).

PBL teaching process consists of five major stages: introduction of PBL, presentation of the problem, peer teaching, presentation of writing, and evaluation progress (Sojisirikul, 2009; Sobary, 2012). Due to a complex nature of PBL, the teacher has to explain the characteristics of PBL and roles of a teacher and students before the actual teaching stage. Then the problem to be used should be relevant and upon students' interest in order to promote their learning. Students are asked to work in groups to brainstorm, share ideas and knowledge, and identify known and unknown points of the problem within the group. The students are asked to conduct peer teaching in order to share their knowledge about the learning content within the group (Tan, 2003). In the process of writing, the students are required to produce multiple drafts of writing and conduct peer assessment to assess other groups' writing before evaluating their own writing task.

In implementing PBL approach in teaching, one aspect often found in a number of previous studies is the investigation of students' perceptions toward the approach. Coffin (2013) found that most of the students in her study agreed that PBL method offered positive impact to their learning. The students were able to improve their communicative skills which are both speaking and writing. Additionally, it improved students to work cooperatively, think critically and enhance self-directed learning. PBL helps students to develop their learning experiences and leads both students and teacher to work harder.

In EFL context, Sojisirikul (2009) also found that 84 third year and fourth year undergraduate students at King Mongkut University of Technology had good positive perceptions toward PBL implemented in English writing class and they also viewed that PBL contributed them to acquire their knowledge acquisition through independent study. As found by Huang (2005), the students in her study perceived that the PBL was more interactive than traditional teaching method, and it allowed them to learn through the problem on their own. Another supporting finding was found by Astawa, Artini & Nitiasih (2017), the students in their study pointed out that PBL was an effective method as it helped them increase communicative ability and content knowledge.

Despite positive results in many aspects of learning, some negative perceptions were also discovered. According to Coffin (2013), the complexity of the PBL process caused some students to be left behind while working in groups.

Mansor, Abdullah, Wahab, Rasul, Mohamed, Nor & Nor (2014) reported that a teacher and students in their study found it difficult to implement PBL in their teaching and learning since PBL was a new and complex teaching method for learning English. They were not familiar with this method. It required both teacher and students to work overload. Expecting more effective outcomes, a teacher of PBL class is required to be well-trained.

In addition, Gwee (2008) argued that PBL is not appropriate for Asian EFL context because of students' low proficiency and lack of ability to converse in English language with their peers. Also, the students in Asia might fail to express what they really think.

Most previous researchers have conducted PBL in their English teaching at tertiary level of study (Sojisirikul, 2009) and a limited number of studies focused on a high school level (Othman & Shah, 2013; Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015), possibly because students are considered having low proficiency of English. Therefore, the researcher would like to examine how high school students perceive PBL learning approach after learning writing through PBL process. This paper thus aims to answer the following questions:

What are high school students' perceptions toward learning English descriptive paragraph writing through PBL approach?

Research methodology

1. Participants

The participants of the current study were 40 Mattayomsuksa 6 students at a school in Yala province, who were assigned into an experimental group of 18 hours of PBL teaching experiment. They were asked to answer the questionnaires asking about their perceptions toward learning writing descriptive paragraph through PBL approach.

2. Context of the study

The participants were assigned to learn descriptive paragraph writing through PBL approach taught by the researcher. In the process of learning, they were first introduced to PBL approach in terms of roles of teacher and students. Then they were asked to engage in PBL lessons following five major teaching stages including introduction of PBL, presentation of the problem, peer teaching, presentation of writing, and evaluation progress (Sojisirikul, 2009; Sobary, 2012). Groups of 4-5 members were constructed to solve the PBL problem

which was writing a descriptive paragraph of 100-120 words. The participants were required to brainstorm and share knowledge based on the knowledge materials showing content for each lesson distributed by the teacher and conducted peer teaching within the group. Then, they were asked to compose three drafts of writing in groups and assessed other groups' writing using the rubrics provided by the teacher. After going through the process of writing and peer assessment, each group was required to evaluate their own writing tasks.

3. Research method

3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire adapted from Sojisirikul's (2009) study was used to investigate students' perceptions toward problem-based learning approach after they learned through PBL approach. It consisted of two parts. The first part consists of 20 statements asking for students' perceptions toward knowledge gained and writing improvement, effectiveness of PBL units, self study and working in groups. The questionnaire was presented in a form of five Likert scale ranging from 5 "Strongly Agree", 4 "Agree", 3 "Neutral", 2 "Disagree" to 1 "Strongly Disagree". The questionnaire distributed to the students was presented in Thai in order to gain theparticipants' in-depth understanding of the questions. The second part was provided for students to give suggestions and comments in open-ended questions.

3.2 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview included six questions. It aimed to discover the students' in-depth perceptions toward the implementation of PBL in learning English writing.

4. Data collection procedures

After the PBL implementation, the questionnaires were distributed to all 40 students in the PBL classroom and twenty participants were randomly selected for the follow-up interviews. The interview was conducted in 60 minutes by two interviewers: ten students for each interviewer due to time constraint. Students' native language; that is, Thai and local Malay were used in order to ensure mutual understanding between interviewers and students.

5. Data analysis

The questionnaire offered both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were computed for the arithmetic means and interpreted through descriptive analysis. The mean scores of all statements were interpreted based on Sojisirikul (2009); that is, the

mean scores of students' perceptions were divided into three levels: bad, good and very good. The classification criteria were taken from a range of scores (one to five) divided by the number of levels created. The value calculated was 1.33, which was added to each mean score, making a range of 1.00-2.33, showing students' bad perceptions toward PBL, 2.34-3.67 representing students' good perceptions, and 3.68-5.00, illustrating students' very good perceptions.

The qualitative data from open-ended questions and the semi-structured interview were mixed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes were grouped and presented descriptively to supplement the findings from the questions.

6. Findings

The collected data from five Likert scale were calculated for the arithmetic mean. The results of the analysis are presented in

Table 1. Table 1 Students' overall perceptions on learning through the problem-based learning approach

Statements	x	SD	Interpretation
Knowledge gained and writing improvement	3.54	0.69	Good
Effectiveness of the PBL unit	3.47	0.69	Good
Self-study	3.40	0.67	Good
Working in groups	3.40	0.70	Good
Total	**3.45**	**0.68**	**Good**

The results in Table 1 reveal that overall the participants well perceived that they had good perceptions toward problem-based learning approach ($\bar{x}$=3.45). When considering each domain, the results reveal that the most highly rated domain was knowledge gained and writing improvement ($\bar{x}$=3.54), followed by self-study and working in group ($\bar{x}$=3.40).

Considering the attributes of each individual domain, the data obtained from the questionnaire revealed the students' perceptions in Tables 2-5.

Table 2 Students' perceptions toward knowledge gained and writing improvement

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	Interpretation
1. I have developed paragraph writing skill.	0	14	20	6	0	2.80	Good
2. I have developed descriptive paragraph writing skill.	0	10	19	10	1	3.05	Good
3. I have acquired new knowledge from class discussion.	0	0	10	22	8	3.95	Very good
4. I have gained various kinds of knowledge about writing such as word choice, sentence structure, and so on.	0	7	19	12	2	3.23	Good
5. I have developed thinking skills, such as thinking reasonably and systematically.	0	1	13	21	5	3.75	Very good
6. I have developed self-directed learning skill.	0	0	17	19	4	3.68	Very good
7. I have developed cooperative learning skill.	0	0	3	22	15	4.30	Very good
Total						$\bar{x}=$ 3.54	Good

When considering the attributes of knowledge gained and writing improvement, the results reveal that the students perceived developing cooperative learning skill as the highest rank ($\bar{x}$=4.30), followed by their acquisition of new knowledge from class discussion ($\bar{x}$=3.95) and the development of thinking skills ($\bar{x}$=3.75). Interestingly, they viewed the development of paragraph writing skill as the lowest rank ($\bar{x}$=2.80).

In qualitative responses, the participants also mentioned that they gained various kinds of knowledge from learning through PBL. They perceived that PBL was not only helpful for developing their writing skills but also improving their communicative skill and cooperative learning skill, as stated in the following comments:

I think I could not only improve my writing skill but also communicative skill. I had a chance to communicate with my friends because the teacher encouraged everyone to discuss in English all the time. (Respondent 14, interview)

I think I have developed cooperative learning skill. Before learning through PBL, I was not confident to work with others. After participating in the PBL class, I changed my mind and I could work in group better than before. (Respondent 8, interview)

Regarding the effectiveness of the PBL unit, the data obtained from the questionnaire showed the students' perceptions in Table 3.

Table 3 Students' perceptions toward effectiveness of the PBL unit

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	Interpretation
1. Numbers of materials provided by teacher, such as handouts and worksheets were adequate.	0	0	8	22	10	4.30	Very good
2. The number of problems was appropriate.	0	1	10	23	6	3.85	Very good
3. The amount in handouts was reasonable.	0	3	20	15	2	3.40	Good
4. Teaching and learning steps were arranged systematically.	0	4	26	9	1	3.18	Good
5. The evaluation was appropriate.	0	2	19	16	3	3.50	Good
6. Time spent for PBL was sufficient.	0	13	21	5	1	2.85	Good
Total						$\bar{x}=$ 3.47	Good

The results in Table 3 show that the students had very good perceptions toward adequacy of numbers of materials provided by the teacher such as handouts and worksheets ($\bar{x}$=4.30). They also viewed that the number of problems were appropriate ($\bar{x}$=3.85) and the evaluation was appropriate ($\bar{x}$=3.50). Despite a good perception about sufficient time spent of PBL, the participants perceived it as the lowest rank ($\bar{x}$=2.85).

The qualitative data reveal that most participants confirmed their positive perceptions about the adequate number of materials provided by the teacher, as stated in the following comments:

> The handouts included everything I wanted to use in writing a descriptive paragraph. I didn't need to search elsewhere. (Respondent 4, interview)

However, it was also found that time allocation and the problem given were seen as problematic. The participants commented that time and problem were not appropriate for their proficiency, as stated in the following remarks:

> I think time given by the teacher was not enough, especially when composing writing. (Respondent 9, interview)

> I think the problem was too difficult for me because I had never learned writing like this before and writing skill is very difficult for me. (Respondent 10, interview)

In terms of the ability to self-study, the participants' views from the questionnaire are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Students' perceptions toward self-study

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	$\bar{x}$	Interpretation
1. I could select reading materials by myself.	0	0	6	20	14	4.20	Very good
2. I could solve any difficulties by myself.	0	7	25	8	0	3.03	Good
3. I did not need the teacher's help.	0	11	19	10	10	2.98	Good

		$\bar{x}=$	Good
Total		3.40	

The results in Table 4 show that the students perceived selecting reading materials by themselves as the highest rank ($\bar{x}$=4.20), followed by solving difficulties by themselves ($\bar{x}$= 3.03). The lowest rank of participants' perceptions found was a need the teacher's help ($\bar{x}$=2.98).

In qualitative responses from semi-structured interview, the participants are likely to have mixed perceptions. On the one hand, most of the participants mentioned that the materials provided by the teacher were convenient for them as they were able to select any materials to read, as affirmed in the following comment:

> In my opinion, the handouts were very useful and helpful. It was very convenient for me that everything was there. I did not have to find any other places because they were enough. (Respondent 13, interview)
> On the other hand, some participants viewed that the materials were too difficult for them, as mentioned in the following comment:

> The handouts were too difficult to understand, the teacher should select easier handouts for students. (Respondent 18, interview)
> Even though, I was able to select the easiest ones to read but I found that most of the materials were too difficult. (Respondent 16, interview)

In relation to collaboration in group, the data obtained from the questionnaire revealed students' perceptions shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Students' perceptions towardworking in group

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly (5)	$\bar{x}$	Interpretation
1. I could work well with others.	0	1	13	22	4	3.73	Very good
2. I have been open to others' opinions.	0	0	13	17	10	3.93	Very good
3. Different English proficiency of group members did not affect my learning.	0	14	19	7	0	2.83	Good

4. I could work in group better than work individually.	0	1	20	16	3	3.53	Good
Total						$\bar{x}=$ 3.40	Good

The results in Table 5 show that the students perceived that they have been open to others' opinions ($\bar{x}$=3.95). They also viewed that they could work well with others ($\bar{x}$=3.73) and work better in group than working individually ($\bar{x}$=3.53).

The qualitative data also support this aspect. The students pointed out that they could learn better when working in group as they were able to share and exchange their knowledge with their peers, as stated in the following comment:

> I like to learn in the group to share the knowledge and discuss with my friends. I could also teach my friend and my friends could teach me something that I didn't know before. I think I could learn better than learning alone. (Respondent 15, questionnaire)

Though the participants preferred to learn in groups, some students viewed that the differences of English proficiency of group members could affect their learning, as stated in the following comment:

> I think I like to work in group in PBL approach if the students' English proficiency is not too different because some students' English is very poor and they did not help our group at all. I understand that they would help but they did not know how to help, so I think my group would work better if the group members' English proficiency were not too different. (Respondent 9, questionnaire)

Discussion

The results from this study reveal that overall the participants have positive perceptions toward learning through PBL approach in all four aspects, namely, knowledge gained and writing improvement, effectiveness of the PBL unit, self-study and working in group. These positive perceptions may be resulted from two major factors. First, the students had an opportunity to exchange their different background knowledge with their peers through group discussion about the focused tasks. While working in group, they were able to discuss different ideas and share feasible and best solutions to problems within the group.

They could also share language skills that they could apply in their tasks making more meaningful learning as found by Antepohl & Herzig (1999).

Another factor could be facilitation given by the teacher. The teacher of this study conducted PBL approach following all the process of learning and teaching of PBL starting from the introduction of PBL to the progress evaluation in order to give support and feedback, and clarify unclear gaps. As the result, the students could develop their knowledge of writing and communicative skill.

These two factors can be explained by sociocultural learning theory (Amerian, Ahmadian & Mehri, 2014), constructivism learning theory (Mvududu & Burgess, 2012) and the zone of proximal development (ZPD), (Samana, 2013) believing that students' learning is thought to happen and develop when they learn throughout their experiences, social interaction, negotiation and collaboration in the comfort area of learning where they are surrounded by their peers in a small group and the assistances are provided by the expert or a teacher to fulfill and complete their set goals. In relation to the nature of PBL process, the students are asked to work on their own in a small group to share and exchange their background knowledge of known and unknown points of the problem, and solve it in order to complete the focused task with teacher's support.

Considering particular aspects of students' perceptions, it was found that in the aspect of knowledge gained and writing improvement, the students could also improve cooperative and thinking skills since they were encouraged to use their background knowledge and way of thinking in order to produce a new form of learning in groups that was comprehensible and useful for them. This point appears to cohere with Gwee (2008) who asserted that PBL enhances students to improve their ability of thinking skill and team work skill. The development of these skills seem to reflect a key benefit of PBL teaching approach. As affirmed by Yuan, Kunaviktikul, Klunklin & Williams (2008), the fact that PBL teaching process challenges students to search for solutions to the real-world situation in groups can offer them with opportunities to direct their own learning while developing thinking skills.

When taking concerning factors into consideration, the finding revealed a mixed view of students' perceptions toward the number of materials, the time allocation and the problem. Most students had good perceptions towards these factors, while others had bad perceptions. One explanation of these conflicting views might be because of the differences of students' proficiencies in English. Some low proficient students might not be capable of

helping or sharing their knowledge within the group, possibly making them ignored, become distrusted and left behind by others as found by Taqi1 & Al-Nouh (2014)

Another concerning factor could be inadequacy of time allocation which is believed to be inadequate. According to Ferris (2007) and Ismail (2007), writing is time consuming and writing skill is considered one of the most difficult skills to master (Na Phuket & Othman, 2015).

Therefore, the teacher of writing class should consider about the adequacy of time allocation to be given to students as stated by Nguyen, Phan & Ly (2011). Expecting effective learning outcomes of writing products, the learners needed an adequacy of time allocation in writing practice.

The last concerning factor could be the problem provided by the teacher. Despite some students enjoyed with the problem as it was challenging and interesting, some students pointed out that the problem was too difficult. Although there was only one problem to be solved, it was about writing English descriptive paragraph, which was likely a new writing concept for the students. Generally, in Thai EFL context, writing lessons offered and required the students to practice grammar rules and vocabulary without focusing on writing as a writing process since examinations usually test students' reading and grammar skills not writing (Dueraman,2013). Therefore, when students learn writing a paragraph, they might find it difficult.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study shows that most students had positive perceptions toward the implementation of problem-based learning in class aiming to develop their writing ability. It can prove that PBL cannot only be implemented in tertiary level of study, ESL context but also in EFL context and a lower level of education where students have low proficiency of English. However, some limitations are needed to be addressed. Firstly, time for the experiment in the present study was only about 18 hours provided for the students to learn the concept of writing a paragraph through to producing their own work. This allocated time seemed to be too limited for the students to effectively build up their cognitive knowledge for writing. Another limitation is the fact that the students were not able to access learning resources through the internet or the library at school and all teaching materials were provided by the teacher. Therefore, some handouts might have been too difficult for the students to understand.

Recommendations

1. Expecting positive learning outcomes of writing skill, a teacher of PBL class should have to understand his or her role, especially facilitating roles when students are asked to identify known and unknown points of the problem and conduct group discussion.

2. One learning group should consist of equal numbers of students with low and high proficiency in English since students with low proficiency will be helped by students who have higher proficiency in English. In other words, the students of different abilities can help each other to explain things or share a good model of language performance in learning (Harmer, 1998, Moon, 2000).

3. As writing skill is time consuming, time to be spent for improving students' writing through this approach should be more than the time allocated in the present study for working on one type of writing including searching information, brainstorming, and exchanging knowledge of writing among the group, composing three drafts of writing, revising, editing and self evaluation (Othman & Shah, 2015).

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