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Developing English Sentence Writing Skills Using SVO Structure through Skill Exercises and Semi-Controlled Writing Technique for Grade 10 Students at Horwang School

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Abstract

This research aimed to develop the English sentence writing ability of Grade 10 students by using Skill Exercises designed based on the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) sentence structure in combination with the Semi-controlled Writing Technique. The purpose was to enhance students' understanding of sentence structure, grammatical accuracy, and confidence in English writing. The study had two main objectives: (1) to compare students' writing achievement before and after participating in the learning activities, and (2) to examine students' satisfaction with the learning process. The participants were forty Grade 10 students from Horwang School. The research instruments consisted of four sets of skill exercises, a pre-test and post-test, and a satisfaction questionnaire. The activities were conducted over six weeks, during which students practiced constructing sentences through systematically designed exercises that progressed from simple to complex, using the semi-controlled writing technique as a training framework. The analysis revealed that students' post-test scores were significantly higher than their pre-test scores at the 0.05 level of significance. Students also reported a high level of satisfaction, particularly regarding the clarity, enjoyment, and usefulness of the exercises and writing techniques. This study indicates that integrating skill exercises with the semi-controlled writing technique effectively enhances accuracy, fluency, and confidence in English writing.

Keywords: SVO structure, semi-controlled writing, writing skills, English education, secondary students

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Study

English is an international language that plays a vital role in global communication, education, and future career development (Crystal, 2003). Among the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—writing is considered one of the most challenging for Thai learners because it requires vocabulary knowledge, grammatical understanding, and the ability to construct sentences correctly (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Yamaalee, 2020). One of the major causes of writing difficulties stems from the structural differences between Thai and English. While the Thai language allows flexibility in word order, English requires a fixed sequence that follows the Subject–Verb–Object (SVO)

pattern (Iamsiu, 2018). As a result, many Thai learners produce grammatically incorrect sentences and lack confidence in writing (Pongsiriwet, 2001).

To address this problem, theoretical instruction alone is not sufficient. It is essential to design systematic and practical learning activities that promote sentence construction skills step by step. Skill Exercises, created specifically to train learners to form English sentences, provide purposeful repetition and structured practice (Harmer, 2007; Kaewprasert, 2021). When these exercises are integrated with the Semi-controlled Writing Technique—an approach that allows learners to write within guided frameworks before moving on to freer writing—students can develop both grammatical accuracy and the confidence to express meaning effectively (Raimes, 1983; Brown, 2001).

The integration of Skill Exercises and the Semi-controlled Writing Technique offers a practical solution for enhancing writing abilities among upper secondary students. The skill exercises guide learners in constructing SVO sentences progressively from basic to more complex levels, while the semi-controlled writing approach helps them apply this knowledge in meaningful communication contexts (Nunan, 2003). This combination not only supports linguistic development but also reduces anxiety and uncertainty during the writing process (Nation, 2009).

The significance of this study lies in the potential of these integrated techniques to improve students' grammatical accuracy, confidence, and attitudes toward English learning. By engaging learners in structured yet supportive writing activities, the approach fosters enjoyment, motivation, and readiness to apply writing skills in higher education and future professional contexts (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

1.1 Research Objective (TNR 12pt., bold)

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To compare Grade 10 students' English writing skills before and after learning through SVO-based skill exercises and semi-controlled writing.
2. To examine students' satisfaction toward the instructional method.

2. Literature review

English writing instruction as a foreign language has shifted from product-oriented approaches, which emphasize the final written output, to process-oriented approaches, which focus on developing writing through stages (Hyland, 2003). The development of writing skills requires both effective learning tools and suitable instructional techniques.

2.1 Skill Exercises

Harmer (2004) noted that structured exercises help students understand grammar more effectively, particularly when applied to basic sentence structures such as SVO, which form the foundation of English syntax (Greenberg, 1963). Raimes (1983) emphasized that repetitive practice builds grammatical accuracy, while Nation (2009) stated that well-designed exercises with clear objectives reduce anxiety and increase confidence among Thai learners.

2.2 Semi-controlled Writing Technique

This technique serves as a bridge between controlled writing and free writing. Students write under specific conditions set by the teacher, such as given topics, sentence structures, or

vocabulary. Hyland (2003) explained that this technique reduces learners' anxiety and enables them to focus on grammatical accuracy. Raimes (1983) also pointed out that it is particularly suitable for beginner to intermediate learners who still lack fluency, as it provides necessary scaffolding. Studies conducted in Thailand by Wiriyachitra (2012) and Chaisiri (2010) confirmed that this technique effectively reduces grammatical errors and enhances learner confidence.

2.3 Integration of Skill Exercises and Semi-controlled Writing Technique

Several studies on English language teaching have found that using skill exercises in combination with the semi-controlled writing technique is a highly effective approach. Skill exercises help develop understanding and accuracy, while the semi-controlled writing technique allows students to use language more naturally and flexibly. The integration of these two methods promotes simultaneous development of both accuracy and fluency in writing.

3. Methodology

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, focusing on the continuous cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

3.1 The participants

The participants consisted of 40 Grade 10 students from Horwang School, selected through cluster random sampling. The research was conducted over six weeks, with one 60-minute session per week.

3.2 Research instruments

1. Pre-test and post-test to assess students' ability to construct correct English sentences.
2. Four sets of writing exercises, aligned with the lesson objectives.
3. A satisfaction questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate students' opinions regarding the enjoyment, usefulness, and understanding of the learning activities.

3.3 Data collection

Week 1: Students took a pre-test (Pre-test).

Weeks 2–5: Instructional Implementation. During Weeks 2 to 5, the lessons were delivered through three main instructional stages to implement the SVO structure through skill exercises and the semi-controlled writing technique effectively.

(1) Introduction and Presentation Stage

At the beginning of each lesson, the teacher introduced the topic, clarified the learning objectives, and taught key vocabulary. A short reading passage was used to provide context, followed by an explicit explanation of the Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) structure. This stage activated students' prior knowledge and prepared them for practice.

(2) Skill Practice Stage

In this stage, Students completed 20 structured exercises that combined Skill Exercises with the Semi-controlled Writing Technique. They identified and separated subjects, verbs, and objects before rearranging them into correct SVO sentences. This step-by-step practice reinforced grammatical accuracy and fluency..

(3) Feedback and Reflection Stage

At the end of each lesson, the teacher provided feedback on frequent errors. Students revised their work accordingly, while the teacher recorded observations of participation, responses, and progress for use in the reflection phase of the Classroom Action Research cycle.

Week 6: Students took a post-test (Post-test) and completed a satisfaction questionnaire.

3.4 Data Analysis

The researcher used descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics through a t-test to compare pre-test and post-test scores.

4. Results

Table 4.1 students' English writing skills before and after learning through SVO-based skill exercises and semi-controlled writing.

Test	N	\bar{x}	S.D.	df	t	Sig.
Pre-test	40	12.00	2.15	39	8.72*	.000
Post-test	40	18.00	2.47			

*p < .05

As shown in Table 4.1, the mean score of students' English writing skills after instruction ($\bar{x} = 18.00$, S.D. = 2.47) was higher than before instruction ($\bar{x} = 12.00$, S.D. = 2.15), with a statistically significant difference at the .05 level ($t = 8.72$, $p < .05$). This result indicates that the implementation of SVO-based skill exercises combined with semi-controlled writing effectively enhanced students' English writing performance.

Table 4.2 Students' satisfaction toward the learning activities

No.	Item	\bar{X}	SD	Level
1	Enjoyment of the activities	4.72	0.43	High
2	Usefulness of the activities	4.68	0.47	High
3	Clarity and understanding	4.55	0.44	High
4	Confidence in writing	4.60	0.42	High
5	Teacher's support and guidance	4.63	0.46	High
6	Suitability of exercises	4.58	0.45	High
7	Appropriateness of time and pacing	4.59	0.40	High
8	Opportunity to practice writing	4.66	0.41	High
9	Engagement during the activities	4.67	0.44	High
10	Overall satisfaction	4.65	0.45	High
Total		4.63	0.44	High

From Table 4.2, students' overall satisfaction toward the learning activities was at a high level ($\bar{x} = 4.63$, S.D. = 0.44). The highest mean score was for "Enjoyment of the activities" ($\bar{x} = 4.72$, S.D. = 0.43), followed by "Usefulness of the activities" ($\bar{x} = 4.68$, S.D. = 0.47) and

“Engagement during the activities” (\bar{x} = 4.67, S.D. = 0.44). All items were rated at a high level, reflecting a positive response to the activities.

5. Conclusion

The results indicate that integrating SVO-based exercises with semi-controlled writing effectively enhanced students’ sentence construction skills, fulfilling the first research objective. Students demonstrated noticeable improvement in grammatical accuracy and sentence formation after the intervention.

Regarding the second objective, students expressed high satisfaction with the learning process, particularly in terms of instructional clarity, activity engagement, material usefulness, and writing practice.

Overall, the integrated approach strengthened both linguistic competence and positive attitudes toward learning English. It is recommended for supporting learners with syntactic difficulties, and future studies may explore its long-term effects and applicability in other contexts.

Acknowledgment

This research was conducted as part of the Bachelor of Education program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The author would like to express sincere appreciation first to the University Language Institute for their guidance and support, followed by the Faculty of Education and Horwang School for their collaboration throughout this study. Special thanks are extended to the research advisor, Asst.Prof.Dr.Teeraporn Plailek, for their invaluable guidance and encouragement.

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