

# Teaching English Writing to Develop Creative Thinking Skills For High School Students

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**Abstract.** *The purpose of this study was to investigate a method of teaching English writing to develop creative thinking skills for high school students. This research was basic descriptive qualitative research intended to describe various methods of teaching English writing to develop creative thinking skills for high school students. Five-scale rating questionnaires and open ended interview were used to investigate the teaching methods to be utilized for creative thinking development using the process of teaching writing, and classroom activities to generate creative thinking of students. The sample of the study were teachers (N=23) in three educational service areas of Chonburi province, and experts (N=15) in Educational Psychology Department at Burapha University. The result showed that the teaching methods always used in teaching English writing to generate creative thinking were: brainstorming, working in groups and pairs, and drill and practice. In the process of teaching English writing, two groups of respondents provided the same answer; but the priorities of “Encouraging students to write”, or “Providing the suitable topic” were also acceptable. The answers to the questions matched four thinking theories in creative thinking, which were: the theory of fluency, the theory of flexibility, the theory of originality and the theory of elaboration. The answers to questions also added to theories of teaching creativity with the two group sample’s suggestion and experienced opinions towards the teaching English writing with creative thinking skills.*

**Keywords:** Teaching Methods, English Writing, Creative Thinking

## Introduction

English is the language most commonly used and understood world wide. It is a very essential and important language for communication. Manivanan (2006) said English language is one tool to establish our viewpoint. We can learn from others experience. As English is used widely in Thailand, many schools encourage their students to study English in early age. High schools in Thailand pay more attention to English language education.

There are four skills of English study: listening, speaking, reading and writing. English writing plays the irreplaceable role in English language education. English language writing involves high school students in recognizing and practicing literal communication. The close relationship between writing and thinking makes writing a valuable part of any language course. It includes situations in which high school students explore their thinking

ability in a thinking environment.

The close relationship between writing and thinking makes writing a valuable part of any language course. It includes situations in which high school students explore their thinking ability in a thinking environment. Robert (2007) explained that thinking skills are important to master the “basics” in education. When high school students use thinking to communicate with literal English language, it can help them to develop their writing ability. There are many aspects of thinking skills, but creative thinking is most worthy to discuss as indicative of understanding rather than memorizing.

Creative thinking is the process which we use when we come up with a new idea. It is a thought process or method used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions. It is the merging of ideas which have not been merged before. Developing creative thinking skills

for high school students focuses on four thinking theories; these four thinking theories can be used effectively to teaching English writing. Creative thinking is important to high school students in that students with ability of creative thinking can improve their ability in communication, especially in English. Teaching high school students to be qualified in English writing for communication might also help them to develop creative thinking skills in their study.

### Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to investigate a method of teaching English writing to develop creative thinking skills for high school students.

### Research Question

The research question to be addressed in this study was as follows:

The main research question was: how do high school teachers teach English writing to develop creative thinking skills for high school students?

There were three research questions divided from the main research questions as follows:

1. What methods could be used in writing English class for creative thinking development?
2. What were the processes of teaching English writing for creative thinking development?
3. What were the guidelines for recommendation to develop creative thinking?

#### Scope of the Study

The information providers were teachers in three educational service areas of Chonburi province who master the knowledge about teaching English, and the experts in Education Psychology Department who could provide information how to develop creative thinking. The scope of the content was based on three aspects, methods of teaching English writing, the process of teaching English writing and principles of teaching creative thinking development. The concept outcomes could be concluded as a method of teaching English writing to develop creative thinking of high school students.

### Literature Review

Many researchers gave the definition of writing. Zamel (1982) said writing is a process through which meaning is created. Raimes (1983) declared

that learners of foreign language have to communicate with each other in writing.

Many researchers suggest that methods of teaching English writing were as follows, Beare (1997) said that the most important factor in writing exercises is that students need to be personally involved in order to make the learning experience of lasting value. Encouraging student participation in the exercise, while at the same time refining and expanding writing skills, requires a certain pragmatic approach. Demonstration (Min, 2006). Writing poem (Johnson & Carruthers, 2006). Work in group and pairs (Storch, 2005). Brainstorming (Osborn, 1963). Integrating music (Cuddy & Duffin, 2005). Creativity response (Allison, 2004). Game (Alberti, 2008). Drill and Practice (Yang, Richardand, & Zhen, 2006). Describing pictures (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2002). Generating ideas (Scheuer & Sola, 2006). Analyzing Genres (Hyland, 2003).

Solas (1992) declared the process of teaching and learning lies at the very heart of education. The more one knows about this process, the better one will be able to influence its growth and direction. Do the pretest of writing (Kirkpatrick & Klein, 2009). Let students present their homework of writing in front of class (Abraham & Sherman, 2007). Do the post test of writing (Storch, 2009). Review the previous knowledge (Victori, 2002). Provide the suitable topic for writing (Hinkel, 2009). Analyze the recommended articles to students before writing (Candlin, Bhatia, & Jensen, 2002). Encourage students to write something to someone everyday (Bump, 1987). Plan for the class to do any kinds of artwork and write something related to their artworks (Regev, & Guttman, 2005). Encourage students to share ideas with partners (Zvacek, 2002).

Some researchers shown the four thinking theories in creative thinking skills. Think of many ideas (principle of fluency) (Sharp, 2008). Think of varied ideas (principle of flexibility) (Sasson, 2007). Think of unusual ideas (principle of originality) (James, 1983). Add to their ideas to make them better (principle of elaboration) (Ely & Plomp, 1996)

### Methodology

It was a survey study asking the opinions of se-

lected teachers and experts on their knowledge about teaching English writing and asking them to evaluate information how to develop creative thinking. This research was basic descriptive qualitative research intended to describe various methods of teaching English writing to develop creative thinking skills for high school students.

The population of the study were the teachers (N=24) in three educational service areas of Chonburi province, and the experts (N=16) in Educational Psychology Department of Burapha University.

The sample selected to represent the population of this study used teachers (N = 23) in three educational service areas of Chonburi province, and a sample of experts (N =15) in educational psychology department in Burapha University, and randomly selected from the above population using Krejcie and Morgan's method of sample technique.

### Limitation of the study

This is the descriptive qualitative research created by teachers about their opinions. It is necessary to expand the discussion in further research by interviewing more experts and testing the feasibility of using the techniques.

### Research Instruments

The instrument for collecting data was an open – ended interview questionnaire. Three parts of the questionnaires were designed for ranking the methods of teaching to develop creative thinking, the process of teaching English writing and how to teaching creative thinking.

The five-scale rating questionnaire and interview used for the study was developed by the

researcher based on the ideas and comments of teachers in three educational service areas of Chonburi, and experts in teaching creative thinking to answer what method of teaching English writing to be utilized to develop creative thinking of high school students. Questionnaire for teachers in three educational service areas of Chonburi province were a mark score from 5 to 1, and rank number from 1-9 steps on the paper. An open – ended interview guide was developed for use with experts in educational psychology in Burapha University. The areas of study were: (1) Methods of Teaching English Writing (2) The Process of Teaching English Writing (3) Principles of Teaching Creative Thinking Development. The samples of the study were 23 teachers in three educational service areas of Chonburi and 15 experts in educational psychology. The two groups were selected by using purposive sampling techniques. Thus, the return rate for questionnaire was 23/24 about 96%. The consents to interview as 15/16 about 94%.

### Results of the Study

The answers were presented in tables to answer these three questions.

The results of the study were organized in 3 parts: (1) Teaching methods to be utilized for creative thinking development. (2) Process of teaching writing, and (3) recommendation to develop creative thinking. They are discussed how to teach creative thinking skills in English writing class for high school students in Chonburi province.

#### 1. Teaching methods to be utilized for creative thinking development

**Table 1 Methods of teaching English writing to be utilized for creative thinking development as perceived by teachers in three educational service areas (N = 23)**

	always (5)	often (4)	sometime (3)	rarely (2)	seldom (1)
Demonstration	5	9	6	3	0
Writing Poem	0	3	7	4	9
Work in Group and Pairs	14	4	4	0	1

	always (5)	often (4)	sometime (3)	rarely (2)	seldom (1)
Brainstorming	9	9	5	0	0
Integrating Music	1	5	10	5	2
Describing Pictures	8	8	5	2	0
Generating Ideas	6	11	6	0	0
Analyzing Genres	2	8	7	2	4
Creative Response	2	7	8	6	0
Games	4	6	6	3	4
Drill and Practice	13	6	2	2	0

From Table 1, teachers perceived that to teach creative thinking skills in English writing class for high school students in Chonburi province, working in group and pairs, drill and practice,

and brainstorming were always used in teaching English writing. Integrating music and creative response were rarely used, the writing poem was seldom used.

**Table 2 Methods of teaching English writing to be utilized for creative thinking development as perceived by experts in educational psychology (N = 15)**

	always (5)	often (4)	sometime (3)	rarely (2)	seldom (1)
Demonstration	7	4	2	2	0
Writing Poem	4	1	5	4	1
Work in Group and Pairs	8	6	1	0	0
Brainstorming	10	4	0	1	0
Integrating Music	0	7	3	3	2
Describing Pictures	6	4	4	1	0
Generating Ideas	2	9	1	2	1
Analyzing Genres	1	5	3	6	0
Creative Response	3	11	1	0	0
Games	5	5	3	1	1
Drill and Practice	8	6	1	0	0

According to Table 2, experts' viewed that to teach creative thinking skills in English writing class for high school students in Chonburi province, brainstorming, work in group and pairs

and drill and practice, were always used in teaching English writing. Writing poem and analyzing genres were rarely used, the integrating music was seldom used.



## 2. Process of teaching English writing for creative thinking development

**Table 3 Process of teaching English writing as perceived by teachers in three educational service areas (N = 23)**

Step	Process of Teaching as perceived by the teachers in three educational service areas
1	Do the pretest of writing Review the previous knowledge Encourage students to write something to someone everyday
2	Analyze the recommended articles to students before writing Provide the suitable topic for writing Encourage students to share ideas with partners
3	Plan for the class to do any kinds of artwork and write something related to their artworks. Encourage students present their homework of writing in front of class Do the post test of writing

From table 3 it can be seen that, to teach writing with creative thinking development, there were 3 steps for teachers' perception to teach creative thinking skills in English writing class for high school students in Chonburi province, Step 1 doing the pretest of writing, reviewing the previous knowledge and encouraging students to write something to someone everyday. Step 2 provid-

ing articles for students before writing, and suitable topic for writing and encouraging students to share ideas with partners. Step 3 planning for the class to do any kinds of artwork and writing something related to their artworks, Encouraging students to present their homework of writing in front of class and to do the post test of writing were required.

**Table 4 Process of teaching English writing as perceived by experts in educational psychology (N = 15)**

Step	Process of Teaching as perceived by experts
1	Do the pretest of writing  Review the previous knowledge  Provide the suitable topic for writing
2	Encourage students to share ideas with partners  Analyze the recommended articles to students before writing  Encourage students to write something to someone everyday
3	Encourage students present their homework of writing in front of class  Plan for the class to do any kinds of artwork and write something related to their artworks.  Do the post test of writing

From table 4 it can be seen that experts recommended 3 steps for teaching writing with creative thinking, to teach creative thinking skills in English writing class for high school students in Chonburi province, step 1 doing the pretest of writing, reviewing the previous knowledge, and providing the suitable topic for writing. step 2 encouraging students to share ideas with partners, analyzing the recommended articles to students before writing and encouraging students to write something to someone everyday. Step 3 encouraging students to present their homework of writing in front of class, to plan for the class to do any kinds of artwork and to write something related to their artworks, and to do the post test of writing.

### 3. What were recommendations to develop creative thinking?

There were 6 questions to be asked two groups of sample about the recommendations to develop creative thinking in English writing class.

1. Can teachers teach creative thinking skills by English writing ? Why ?
2. How do you construct writing lessons that incorporate teaching thinking skills into English writing ?
3. What do you need to change from normal methods of teaching when you teach English writing ?
4. How would you map (make a thinking map) to show the creative thinking skills being used by students when they write ?
5. How do the teachers know the students have creative thinking skills?
6. How can the teachers verify reflective practice in applying English writing for creative thinking?

The results of the study indicated the teachers and experts knew about developing the four principles in creative thinking. Their recommendations to develop thinking can be shown as follows:

#### 3.1 The views of teachers in three educational service areas

Regarding question about how to teach creative thinking skills, there were 3 teachers giving the same opinion; that is to encourage students to think and help them to explore ideas and think creatively. This is consistent with the principle of

fluency, which views creativity as thinking of many ideas.

Regarding question about incorporating thinking skills into writing lessons, four of the teachers had the same opinion, that is, using pictures and brainstorming. It is according the principle of flexibility , which views creativity as thinking of varied ideas.

Regarding question about how to make a thinking map to show the creative thinking skills, there are three teachers with the same opinion that brainstorming could be used. It is also in agreement with the principle of flexibility, which views creativity as thinking of varied ideas.

#### 3.2 The views of Experts in educational psychology

Regarding question about how to construct writing lessons that incorporate teaching thinking skills into English writing, there are five experts with the same opinion, that is, when asking students some questions, students give creative response as much as possible to the writing. It is according the principle of elaboration, which views creativity as adding to their ideas to make them better.

Regarding question about how to make a thinking map to show the creative thinking skills, one of them using brainstorming. It is according the principle of flexibility, which views creativity as thinking of varied ideas.

Regarding question about verify reflective practice in applying English writing for creative thinking, there are seven experts with the same opinion, that is to ask students to do more new interesting activities and do more drills. It is in accordance the principle of originality, which views creativity as thinking of unusual ideas.

### Conclusion

The result showed that the teaching methods always used in teaching English writing to generate creative thinking were: brainstorming, working in groups and pairs, and drill and practice. In the process of teaching English writing, two groups of respondents provided the same answer, but the priorities of “Encouraging students to write”, or “Providing the suitable topic” can be different. The answers to the questions matched four thinking theories in creative thinking, which were: the

principle of fluency, the principle of flexibility, the principle of originality and the principle of elaboration. The answers to questions also added to theories of teaching creativity with the two group sample's suggestion and experienced opinions towards the teaching English writing with creative thinking skills.

### **Discussion of the findings**

This section is a discussion of possible explanations of the differences found when comparing answers from the respondents.

#### **1. Teaching methods to be utilized for creative thinking development**

The reason for different preferences may be that teachers and experts have different knowledge background. The teachers in three educational service areas, probably have little background knowledge of creative thinking in psychology area. They pay attention to teaching the content of the course in class, so teachers used demonstration less than experts would recommend. (Min, 2006).

#### **2. Technique of teaching English writing for creative thinking development**

The researcher suspected that teachers and experts have different knowledge background. The teachers in three educational service areas, are not required to have background knowledge of creative thinking in psychology area. The teachers pay more attention to practice in writing class, encouraging students write something everyday, they can familiar with the sentence structure and have a good opportunity train to express their ideas more easily and naturally. It also can help students do the good preparation before they learn writing skills. But the experts in educational psychology with the background of thinking, they considered that providing the suitable topic for writing can motivate students' creative thinking skills in English writing. It is necessary to accept both teachers and experts opinions in order to teaching English writing to develop creative thinking skills for students. Both "Encouraging students to write something to someone everyday" and "Providing the suitable topic for writing" can be used in first step and second step. They could be changed from first step to second step according to different teachers and different teaching styles. (Chandler, 2003).

### **3. Recommendations to develop creative thinking as perceived by teachers in three educational service areas and experts in educational psychology based on open ended questions**

Regarding question about changing from normal methods of teaching, the answers from teachers and experts is in accordance the four principles of thinking. Teachers and experts give their suggestion and experienced opinions about changing normal methods with creative thinking skills in teaching English writing.

Their answers suggest that there is benefit in teaching students methods for focused thinking in problem-solving; these methods, however, should be regarded as a kind of heuristics that can help guide the thinking process rather than being used as strict algorithms. The important point is to provide pupils with opportunities to develop their own thinking methods and explain their ideas (Barak & Mesika, 2007).

Regarding question about how to know the students have creative thinking skills, the answers from teachers and experts were not consistent with the four principles of creativity. Teachers and experts give their suggestion and experienced opinions about how to check students' creative thinking skills in teaching English writing. (Runco, 1992).

### **Recommendations**

There are two parts of recommendations, the first part is for directors of schools to make policy in teaching English and other subjects which promotes creative thinking. The second part is for teachers of English to improve methods of teaching for creative thinking.

The directors of schools should provide policy for all teachers to pay more attention to methods of teachers to be utilized for the development of creative thinking. Support teachers of any subjects to use English as a medium of teaching based on creative thinking of students. Develop a system of integrated teaching among subjects also based on principles of creative thinking development.

Teachers of English should be encouraged to study creative thinking principles. Teacher should also know how to teach English with creative thinking skills, investigate the proper methods connected with principles of creative thinking, and the suitable ways to evaluate students' creative thinking skills in class.

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