

Chapter One

Background to the Study

1.0 Overview

This chapter provides introductory accounts regarding ‘the Use of Guided Writing Activities in an EFL classroom in Thailand’. It describes the background to EFL, functions of English in Thailand, and the history of EFL in Thailand. Then, the status of English discusses writing skills in the recent English syllabus of primary and secondary level. Next, the rationale of the study consists of the general problems of writing instruction in Thai upper secondary schools, the preliminary writing instruction problems at a certain school, and reasons for implementing guided writing activities. This is followed by purpose of the study, research questions, the aims of the study, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

1.1.1 Background to EFL

In the non-native circle, the terms ‘ESL’ or ‘English as a Second Language’ and ‘EFL’ or ‘English as a Foreign Language’ seem to be interchangeably used. In fact, they are different. Basically, the terms ‘second’ or ‘foreign’ refer to the breadth of situation in which the language is based and the proficiency level attained by the speakers concerned. A second language covers more domains of communication than a foreign language, and a second language speaker shows higher fluency than a foreign speaker of the same language.

Consequently, the distinction of ESL and EFL can be judged by the function of English language in relation to society, such as the significance of English in the development of the country's educated classes, the role of English in the mass media, and higher education, and its function as a language of day-to-day communication among the population (Asmah, 1994).

ESL means English is considered the second language after the national language in a certain country. It may be used as a medium of instruction or the official language in schools or other institutions, such as English in Malaysia and the Philippines. For example, in Malaysia, English is a compulsory subject in the Malaysian school curriculum, the language used in academia, especially for research in science and technology, the language for enhancing the chance for good jobs, local and international trade and commerce and the lingua franca among the middle class, especially in large towns and cities (Chitravelu et al, 1995). Furthermore, ESL can mean the official language and the medium of instruction from elementary level to tertiary level, such as the case of English in Singapore and South Africa. For instance, in Singapore, English is the official language and language of public administration. As in Malaysia, English has become the medium by which most Singaporeans gain access to information and knowledge from around the world. The ability to speak and write English effectively, therefore, has become an essential skill in the workplace, and the mastery of English is vital to Singapore's pupils (Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2001). On the other hand, Kang (1999) states that 'EFL' means English is used neither as a medium of instruction nor as an official language for school subjects. In addition, it is used only for international communication but not for intra-national communication, such as the case of English in Thailand and Japan.

1.1.2 Functions of English in Thailand

In Thailand, though English is more considered EFL than ESL, it has been used for many functions. According to McKay (1992), firstly, in the governmental domain, English is used by Thai government officials for international communication and for regional conferences, by the diplomats for international relations, and by Thai negotiators in promoting Thailand's industrial enterprise and products.

Secondly, in the commercial sector, English is used by tourist agencies, hotels, airlines, banks and interpreters for communicating with non-Thais, and by translators for research studies and import-export business documents. Besides, English names are used as words of marketing strategy to advertise Thai products, sections of shopping complexes, hotels, companies and organizations, and in Thai magazines and newspapers, bill-boards, signs or posters, Thai radio and television programs, and Thai product promotions by the Thai government (Masavisut et al, 1986). Thirdly, English is widely used by the elite as a symbol of education and status, particularly among members of the Royal family, high-ranking government officials as well as rich businessmen and their families.

The fourth group of users is in the mass media and publications sectors. English is the current language in news channels and variety shows in Thai television, as well as the language of imported films. Examples of language programs are 'News Line' and 'Morning Talk' programs on channel 11, 'Foot Fit Fo Fai' on channel 9, 'Talk of the Town' on channel 3, and 'Kru Kate's Clinic', a part of 'New Alternative' program on channel ITV. Though the Hollywood movie programs are dubbed in Thai television, those with

English sound track and Thai sub-title are shown in cinemas around Thailand. Moreover, English news from BBC London and from Thailand's national broadcast radio is transmitted around Thailand. However, songs and documentary radio programs in English are mostly broadcast only in Bangkok and the main provinces in each region. Furthermore, two English newspapers, 'The Nation' and 'Bangkok Post' are widely read by educated Thai readers and foreigners in Thailand. Some English magazines, by Phongdeit Jiangphetthanakit, and English documentary 'Nation Junior', 'Student Weekly', 'Student Times', and 'The Future' are still popular among Thai teens. 'Sawasdee' is also a well-known English tourist magazine for Thai Airways International passengers. Some creative writings in English are written by Thai authors. For example, 'the Pirate of Tarutao' of Paul Adirex, 'Little Things' by Prajuab Tirabutana, and 'Monsoon Country' by Pira Sudham, are mainly bestseller novels. 'Poems from Thailand' are composed by Narawadee. Moreover, English translated Thai literary works, such as 'the Judgement' of Chart Kobjitti translated books written by Thai authors are being promoted at Asia Books Publication and Duangkamol Book House, Bangkok and its branches around Thailand.

Finally, English also functions as a language for informal education in Thailand. Even though English is not a medium of instruction, it is used for acquiring knowledge and information in various areas by Thai learners, teachers and the professionals through foreign books, a journal for Thai teachers and learners of English titled 'PASAA' of Chulalongkorn University Language Institute, academic writing and research as well as homepages in the cyber world. In short, Thai users have mainly acquired English through the educational domain; the educational domain builds the foundation for the use of English for the other domains. It is in schools that Thais learn English for communicative purposes.

1.1.3 History of EFL in Thailand

English first came to Thailand since the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851) through the First Anglo-Siamese Treaty, namely Burney Treaty 1826 as a strategy for Siam's independence, the knowledge of Christian missionaries, particularly the knowledge of western sciences and modern technology in English was acquired by the Siamese Royalty, and the ruling class (Masavisut et al, 1986). However, English was first taught during the reign of King Mongkut, namely King Rama IV in order for Thailand to participate in international trade. Only the Royal family and Thai government officials were taught by the native teachers, such as Anna Leonowens. Then, English was first introduced to the Thai public school curriculum in 1913 through direct method. Next, the grammar-translation method was used by Thai teachers of English. This was later changed to the audio-lingual method. Since 1978 communicative language teaching (CLT) has been used, and in 1996 it was improved (Lanuy, 1995). According to the Thai Ministry of Education (1996), this present English language syllabus aims to develop the learners' English competence for communicating in various situations with cognitive linguistic function, and to enable them to understand various cultures in order to appropriately participate in the native speakers' society and to present Thai culture to the globe.

1.1.4 Status of English

English is taught as a compulsory subject for Thai primary and secondary schools. All students are required to learn English as an important foreign language for 12 years. In the lower and upper secondary levels, they have to take at least 12 credits of English

courses. In addition, they are required to learn at least 6 credits of English courses at the tertiary level. However, the Fundamental English courses in which the content is related to that in the upper secondary level are taught in some universities. Perhaps, English for specific purposes will be started in some universities (Chulalongkorn University, 1995).

To learn English at the advanced level or use it for various functions effectively, Thai learners must be basically trained in the English language at the elementary and intermediate levels. In this respect, one of this syllabus's sub aims is involved, namely enabling Thai learners to listen, speak, read and write for communicating and acquiring knowledge. Four language skills are integrated in CLT theory, but the writing skill in English is probably the least necessary in Thailand. As Thai is the medium of instruction, most English courses focus on reading comprehension, and Thai learners and users prefer to be trained in aural-oral skills by native speakers in many language institutions within a given time period. However, few Thais need to master the writing skill as it is considered an advanced skill. To acquire this skill, they have to undergo time-consuming and systematic instruction (Smithies, 1972). As a result, the focus of writing skills in this primary and secondary school syllabus is on the basic stages for developing writing skills for general and specific purposes at the university level.

The Thai Ministry of Education has introduced writing instruction for primary education to focus on upgrading the literacy level and this is at Grades 3-4. Due to limited time, 6 periods a week, (one period has 20 minutes), writing is integrated with reading activities. The writing tasks focus on learning the written English system which involves spelling the words by reading and writing as some basic vocabulary has been learnt through

listening and speaking at the preparatory level, namely Grades 1-2 before, and development of reading and writing ability through hand-writing and answering questions. Besides, with the English course in the Beginner Fundamental level or Grades 5-6 based on 15 periods per a week, writing is intensively taught and learnt with the writing tasks. For example, writing statements, correctly spelling the words, and using correct punctuation marks are conducted in pair and group work. Both the literacy and beginner fundamental students' writing tasks will be assessed in three stages, pre-study, study, and post-study of writing parts and they will be measured by proficiency-test for graduation.

During secondary education, writing activities in the fundamental English course, both at upper and lower levels require the students to correctly listen to, speak, read, and write communicatively in English at their own levels. Moreover, in the elective course 'English for English concentration', writing is focused on at both levels. While the focus of writing in the lower level is on narratives, at the upper level, it is on writing various forms.

Generally at the lower secondary level examples of communicative writing tasks are dialogue writing, writing short statements for expressions, taking-making notes, writing cards, and writing notes for communicative purposes through various writing activities, such as ordering, completing information gap, language games, substitution drills, true/false question-answer drill, and sentence building. Based on cognitive linguistic function, they are form-filling, writing opinions, writing poems, and writing reports, with dictation, speaking-writing, reading-writing and information transfer activities.

The emphasis of communicative writing at the upper secondary level is on letter writing with many functions, such as asking for information, thanking and responding to thanks, apologizing and accepting an apology, expressing admiration and compliments or complaints, through pre-writing activities, such as simulation, jigsaw, and pair work. Based on cognitive linguistic function, students paraphrase messages from narrative writings, interviews, news, poems and telephone conversations, form-filling, writing comments on a given topic, and writing Haiku poems through group work activities.

Both the lower and upper secondary students' writing tasks will be assessed in three stages, pre-study, study, and post-study of writing parts, in theory, practice, attitudes through the instruments; test, observation forms, evaluation forms and portfolio.

The importance of writing instruction in Thai secondary education can be visualized in the fundamental English course evaluation of Grades 10-12, compared to the other skills. At Grade 10, writing skills consist of 24 percent of the whole score while listening-speaking is 30 % and reading is 36 %. However, at Grade 11, writing is the most important skill; it is 34 % of course evaluation while listening is 12 %, speaking is 12 %, and reading is 32 %. Moreover, at Grade 12, writing is 25 % but listening is 14 %, speaking is 23 %, reading is 18 %, translating is 9 %, and participating in native speaker and Thai culture activities in English is 1 %. These course evaluation grades also include 10 % for attendance (English Language Regional Instruction Center Songkhla, 1996).

The various forms of writing are taught at different grades. At Grade 10, 10 periods (1 period per 50 minutes) are allocated for writing grammatical sentences. Then, 9 periods

are allocated for teaching form-filling, personal letters, notes, cards for congratulations, and narrative writing. At Grade 11, 8 periods are allocated for categories of writing forms and writing sentences, another 8 periods are allocated for descriptive and narrative writing, and 7 periods are allocated for personal letters, application letters, and form-filling. Moreover, at Grade 12, there are three types of writing forms. The first type involves writing sentences with complex vocabulary found in the university entrance examination for which 7 periods are allocated. The second type, namely diary, story writing, paragraph writing and paraphrasing is taught for 8 periods. The third type, namely the writing of personal and application letters, and forms for various purposes is for 5 periods.

In terms of the evaluation, the percentage allocated for writing in each grade is different. At Grade 10, 24 % is allocated for writing skills which consists of pre-mid term score (4/15), mid-term examination (9/20), and final examination (11/40). At Grade 11, 34 % is allocated for writing skills which is distributed between mid-term examination (9/20), and final examination (25/40). Besides, at Grade 12, 25 % of writing skills include pre-mid term score (6/15), post-mid term score (4/15), and final examination (15/40).

Though written English is not an individual course in Thai secondary education, its instruction seems to point out the development of the students' abilities and experiences through various communicative writing tasks and activities. Throughout the fundamental English course evaluation at the upper secondary level, writing seems to be the second most important skill after the reading skill. However, while the interest of the society and teaching and learning of English in Thailand focuses on reading, writing, listening, speaking and subsequent translating, writing skills are more required in the business sector

than the other skills (Sukamolsan, 1990). Moreover, since the opportunity for Thai learners to practise and master listening and speaking skills in Thai society is quite rare, writing is more important than those skills in Thai secondary school curriculum.

All in all, the written English instruction in Thai primary and secondary education is more based on the product approach than process approach because the emphasis is on how to learn writing communicatively and meaningfully rather than mastering writing skills proficiently. The word and sentence levels are suitable for the primary school students, followed by practising short paragraphs with various communicative writing tasks at the secondary level in order to teach students to write essays or compositions which will be introduced to them at the tertiary level. Without any opportunity to face 'free writing', Thai secondary students must be taught the range of controlled and guided writing activities.

As in the EFL context, Thai secondary learners seem to use the literacy skills of writing and reading rather than listening and speaking skills, their oral proficiency in English is thus limited. On the other hand, in the ESL context, Malaysian secondary learners' proficiency in English covers all four skills. They have to be able to 'listen to and understand spoken English in the school and in real life situations, speak effectively on a variety of topics, read and understand prose and poetry for information and enjoyment, and write effectively for different purposes' (Noraini et al, 1997:108). In terms of writing skills, they are taught how to write a composition through four points, step-by-step instruction, provision of models, grammar and vocabulary appropriate for the writing need of students, and the various stages of the writing process (Chitravelu et al, 1995).

The differences between the English proficiency of Thai and Malaysian secondary learners are caused by differences between in the aims of English language syllabus, and function and status of English between Thailand and Malaysia. However, as non-native users of English, they still need English in their society, at least for enhancing the chance of good jobs.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

In Thai secondary education, writing is the most important skill as it is the main skill that is evaluated in examinations. However, English language teaching seems problematic, especially teaching of the writing skills. There are many causes for these problems. To facilitate writing instruction in an EFL context, guided writing activities will be explored in this study.

The basic cause for the problems of writing instruction is firstly the difference between English and Thai and their written systems, and secondly the nature of writing itself. The former inevitably causes Thai learners to face difficulty in writing. While English belongs to the West Germanic group of the Indo-European family, Thai belongs to the Tai family of the higher Sino-Tibetan family (Singhapan, 1983). Hence, their phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics and lexicon are very different from each other. English and Thai writing systems are different, in terms of verb-tense. Consequently, Thai learners have the problems in the mechanics of writing and grammar while writing English (Rattanakul, 2000). Then, writing is naturally the most difficult skill for first, second and foreign language learners. It is a complex cognitive activity in which the writer has to

control the sentence level, such as content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and letter formation, and control beyond the sentence level, structuring and integrating information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and text (Nunan, 1989). Moreover, Sangboon (1993) views that Thai teachers of EFL have to understand the complication of writing task which requires purpose, thinking, drafting, knowledge of audience, rewriting and persistence and time before teaching.

The main factors to be discussed here involve the syllabus designer, the Ministry of Education, the university affair, the teachers, and the learners themselves. Firstly, though the syllabus designer has intensified written English instruction at the secondary level in this syllabus to enable the students to master the basic writing skill to use it effectively at the university level, the earlier instruction based on the grammar-translation method has not been effective in improving fluency in writing tasks. Hence, the actual task of writing is more developed at the university level rather than at the secondary level. Due to the demands of work, there is focus on practical skills such as report writing in the fields of study and business writing. Hence, at the tertiary level, there are also problems due to lack of sufficient background knowledge of writing skills at the secondary level.

Furthermore, many textbooks for teaching of English writing skills in the Thai market as well as the supplementary books, recommended by the Ministry of Education, are too advanced for Thai students' language ability. Most are written by native authors, and have the western cultural background, so the teachers face difficulty to adapt them for teaching and Thai learners often perform the writing exercises wrongly or produce the written work after misunderstanding the message.

The Thai university factor is another cause for problems at the upper secondary level. The university entrance examination English courses are not based on CLT. They focus on reading comprehension, conversation-gap filling, and written expressions based on using correct grammatical structures with only multiple-choice questions. The actual writing test is thus not given. Mostly, the principals of Thai schools seem to want their upper secondary pupils to pass this examination as much as possible for the schools' reputation. The English teachers have to follow their school policy. The teaching of English at this level therefore focuses on this examination rather than enabling students to write and practise the communicative task in English (Inthasamrith, 1986).

Thai secondary school students are not able to write English well because of their English teachers' ineffective teaching methods. Most qualified and skillful teachers prefer working at the tertiary level rather than in the primary and secondary schools. Many of the rural schools, seem to lack sufficiently-trained English teachers, and seem to have those who are not sincere to train their students to acquire this skill, or who use ineffective teaching methods using grammar-translation rather than communicative approach (Ubol, 1979), or neglect the various techniques of teaching of writing. In addition, Tanchotikul (1990) says many English teachers in the South of Thailand find it difficult to teach writing communicatively due to two reasons. Writing is perceived as something dull, which can not stimulate classroom interaction. Moreover, they have no confidence in teaching students to produce a good text. As a result, whenever there are time-constraints, writing tends to be left out.

The last factor why teaching of English writing at this level is problematic is the habits of Thai learners themselves. The habit of word-for-word translation from Thai to English by using dictionaries causes them to lack self-confidence to think in English or produce their first draft in English, and wastes time to complete their writing tasks (Ubol, 1979). Besides, there is the mental factor in learning English and other foreign languages. Their negative attitude towards written English is due to the intelligibility, language aptitude, or poor background in English at the primary level. Externally, if their family does not motivate them to learn English, they are not prompted to acquire it.

The reasons why there are problems in teaching of the writing skills in Thai secondary schools is realized by the researcher. Based on his experience teaching 1 semester of English language at Thayaiwittaya School, an Islamic private school in Hat Yai, Songkhla, Thailand, the researcher found that these English teachers have many teaching periods and lacked authentic material in the teaching of EFL writing in Thailand. Hence, the effectiveness of teaching English writing skills is ineffective, and understanding students' problems and training them through writing activities was very rare. Moreover, the researcher's previous learners had limited time to practise written English, for they had to learn another three languages, Thai, Arabic, and Malay, in the secular and Islamic study curriculum. Besides, they were grade and university entrance exam-oriented learners, so in their view, reading and grammatical competence are more important than writing.

The researcher has recently surveyed the problems in teaching and learning of writing skills by interviewing the English teacher in this school and analyzing the final examination of the Fundamental English course (E 0110), semester 2 / 2000 for Grade 11

students of three classes (**Appendix A**). The exam paper contains two parts with 1.30 hours time allocation. **Part one** consists of reading passages, using dictionary, and grammatical structure based on multiple-choice questions and the total marks is 25. **Part two** consists of three actual writing tasks, narrative writing, form-filling, and friendly letter with 5 marks for each task. In terms of writing tasks, only narrative writing and friendly letter tasks present problems. The English teacher of this course said these two writing tasks were poorly performed by these students at Grade 12.

The poor performance in those writing tasks shows that the students cannot write them well though they were trained to do these tasks through exercises from the textbooks. The actual problems of students' performing these tasks can be summed up.

For Narrative Writing Task, namely telling a story through a series of pictures, the English teacher revealed that the content was incoherently organized and misinterpreted in relation to the guided pictures. Then, the grammatical structure and vocabulary were incorrect, that is, past-tense was not used and vocabulary used did not convey the content in the pictures. Last, paragraph organization was incoherent. At this point, the researcher viewed that such problems were caused by the complicated content of the series of the pictures given. Though the event in the pictures was somewhat adapted to the Thai context, its sociolinguistic meaning is still unrelated to Thai culture and thus was unsuitable for Thai upper secondary students.

For the Friendly Letter Writing Task, the teacher claimed that the purpose of the friendly letter is not stated. The content is also not interesting; the students wrote the typical

ideas used in the classroom exercises. Besides, the grammatical structure is unspecified and vocabulary items were not given. In this way, the researcher viewed that such problems were also caused by the type of writing task, namely free writing which was unsuitable for the EFL elementary and intermediate learners, and by the ambiguous instruction of this letter writing task, namely 'write a letter to your friend (at least 15 sentences)'.

Those problems were also caused by the English teachers' teaching methods. Firstly, the teacher trained the learners through the writing exercises in Blueprint Book II based on native speaker culture and advanced language structure, and provided them with a few relevant exercises from other texts. Secondly, the teacher used self-access learning through this book without understanding each learner's English background. Finally, the teacher used the grammar-translation method in explaining the writing tasks in the books due to the learners' incompetence in English.

Those students' real problems in performing the narrative writing task and the friendly letter task will be addressed through the use of guided writing activities suggested in this research study. Guided writing consists of a variety of tasks in the teaching of communicative English. It will enable Thai learners to develop their writing competence due to its systematic nature.

Guided writing is one technique of teaching ESL/EFL writing. It provides an opportunity to work with the group of students or the individual on the effective writing strategies as determined through teacher observation of student's behavior and work. The needed strategies and skills are demonstrated within the context of authentic writing tasks

(Mora, 2000). Then, Lanuy (1995) says the guided writing task is taught for students who are able to write, but who are inaccurate in their personal writing. The teacher thus has to introduce vocabulary, sentence structure, ideas or outlines. Besides, it provides practice in using the grammatical points taught in the language summary, and gives the students more freedom to apply the vocabulary, and organization introduced in the reading passage (Hobleman et al, 1990). All in all, the guided writing activity is used to help the students, who have learned the second or foreign language in the early stages, but are still not fluent in the writing skills. It is used by the teacher to take the students from controlled to guided and free writing. In controlled writing, the teacher may enable them to be familiar with the models of what they are expected to write by following these models closely. Then, the teacher can provide relevant lexical items, syntactic structure, ideas, and outline in order to encourage them to create the writing composition more meaningfully.

Another peculiarity of guided writing activities is the introduction of new material and new method in the teaching of writing. Tongue et al. (1976) views that taking new approaches to guided writing may solve the problems of writing instruction. It is new material which can be used at various levels and which ensures that teachers have a graded syllabus to work from, and a clear idea of the register restriction involved. Guided writing activities are self-paced; teachers can understand their students' writing problems easily and teach them altogether since each individual pupil can proceed at his own pace; the fast learners are not held back and the slow learners are not over-extended. Another method suggested by McKay (1979) is the use of selected pictures that could encourage students to put their feelings and thoughts into words in a more vivid and lucid manner in the guided writing activity.

This study aims to explore the possibility that some of the problems in teaching and learning of narrative writing and friendly letter writing among upper secondary school students in Thailand may be overcome if guided writing activities are implemented.

Tanchotikul (1990) introduces the framework of guided writing activities in teaching a narrative. Firstly, the teacher and students negotiate the topic to be written. The creation of an audience to read their writing will help activate students' thoughts about what to write and it can be modified according to the classroom situation. Secondly, the teacher's introduction of the schematic structure of a narrative that is orientation, complication, and resolution will provide them with a framework within which they can arrange their experience into a text suitable as a story. The secondary students have acquired some knowledge of the world. However, leaving them to write on their own may lead to frustration over what and how to write. The teacher should realize the schematic structure of a narrative. It is a cultural aspect of the target language. Hence, teaching narrative provides students not only with the tools of a new language but also the cultural framework of that language. Thirdly, the teacher can show the models of a narrative, and use oral activities to enable them to start thinking about a story to be written. Lastly, they are assigned to write a story that has been negotiated in the first activity.

Apart from this, pairs of pictures or pictures in sequence will provide a variety of guided and free writing activities. A picture sequence, such as a comic strip, provides the subject matter for writing narratives and speculating about the story beyond the pictures in the strip. A set of parallel pictures – pictures that show a similar scene or tell a similar story – provides materials that offer guidance on vocabulary, sentence structure and organization

yet lets the students write about new subject matter (Raimes, 1983: 36).

For friendly letter, the pen-friend letter is chosen to be guided writing task since it is authentic communicative writing, and its functions, namely greeting, making a new friend, and sharing experiences as well as form and language are not too difficult for those EFL students. Using guided writing activities in this task, suggested by Tompkins (2000), can easily be done. In the controlled activities, the teacher can introduce the format and models of this letter, and give the students an authentic audience and address. Then, during pre-guided writing activities, the teacher can help them to decide what to include in the letter by brainstorming the list of possible topics and finally decide on the main idea and details, such as 'Me and My Family', 'My school', 'My hobbies' and 'Questions'.

In brief, narrative writing and pen friend letter will be designed as a new material with the range of controlled to guided writing activities through the language, product, and communicative approaches. Then, the extent of two guided writing tasks above in relation to the peculiarities of guided writing will be discussed.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of guided writing activities used in the narrative writing and the pen-friend letter tasks of the Fundamental English course among 20 good and average students aged 16-18, who have been learning English as a foreign language for 7 years, in the Islamic private school, Thailand. The aims are;

- (1) To identify the strengths and weaknesses of using guided writing activities.
- (2) To identify the problems faced by the learners while using guided writing activities.
- (3) To obtain feedback and suggestions from the teachers in order to improve guided writing activities.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the research questions are;

- (1) What are the strengths and weaknesses of using guided writing activities?
- (2) What problems do the learners face while using guided writing activities?
- (3) What suggestions are provided by the teachers in order to improve guided writing activities?

1.5 The Aims of the Study

The aims of this study can be viewed in two aspects. It is firstly an alternative method of teaching upper secondary students' writing skills in English. Guided writing activities provide experienced or inexperienced Thai teachers of English with some assistance in solving their problems of teaching writing at this level by providing an alternative teaching methods, techniques, and evaluation which are more suitable to their learners' abilities. The novice teachers could consider this study as the introductory lesson of writing instruction while taking into consideration the capacities and background of their learners. In addition, it requires the experienced teachers, who face some problems when using this method in teaching of writing, to use the findings of this study to improve their

teaching of writing. Those who seldom employ this method could consider it as a new method to teach writing to Thai learners.

This study's material design and development require that Thai teachers of English to evaluate their textbooks and supplementary books, in which writing tasks, activities, and exercises with texts and pictures that are based on non-Thai culture are too advanced for students' language abilities, hence need to adapt with regard to their students' needs, circumstances, learning development, and communicative uses in Thai society. Moreover, there is a need for the integration of grammar-translation method and communicative language teaching to enable the students to produce written work grammatically, creatively, meaningfully, and communicatively. Furthermore, the techniques of teaching of writing will be useful if the teachers choose them in relation to the students' experiences in learning and practising writing skills. Besides, the achievement test, self and peer evaluation, analytical marking method, and on-going assessment have been used as evaluation methods to motivate the teachers aware that for students' writing ability, they have to consider various factors that determine their writing development.

It is secondly believed to equip the learners with the basic skills to achieve certain writing tasks. Those basic skills cover their writing development, namely the integration of five language skills and components of the writing skill. Firstly, this study considers the development of Thai students' writing skills from primary to university level. It attempts to develop their writing skills from words and sentences at primary level and in short paragraph at lower secondary level, and to longer paragraph writing skills and to a variety of writing tasks requiring essay writing skills so that they are prepared for the university

level. The five language skills used namely listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating are integrated to enable them to write competently. Next, it provides them with practice in the usage of components of the writing skill, such as language structure, content, mechanics of writing, styles from texts and models, and paragraph organization, through pre-writing activities. Besides, they can be assisted to carry out guided writing tasks, through the researcher's guidance, self-access learning, and cooperative learning.

1.6 The Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the Thai Ministry of Education, will adopt this approach for training teachers for teaching written English. This study is a new approach for teaching of EFL writing skills in the Thai context adapted from teaching of ESL writing skills in the Malaysian context. The findings would be beneficial to syllabus designers of English, in the Curriculum Development Center, for modifying those objectives for writing instruction, language content, and guide for teaching procedures of Fundamental English course for Grades 10-12 and of English creative writing, one of elective courses in 'English for English Concentration' which is chosen by a few schools. It can also be a guide for the material developer of English courses at this level. This study recommends that the material development division of this center cooperate with academic book publishers of private sector, recommended by the Ministry of Education, to produce new English textbooks for Thai students and the teacher's supplementary books in which some parts contain guided writing activities based on Thai students' communicative uses in Thai society.

The findings of this study should be considered by the Department of Teacher Education as this methodology can be incorporated into courses in pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher education. For the former training, this methodology should be incorporated into English courses at 36 Rajabhat Institutes or teacher training colleges and at the Faculty of Education of some universities around Thailand before their practicum at the upper secondary level. For the latter, the Supervisory Unit, which is responsible for in-service teacher education should incorporate this methodology when conducting ‘The Key Personnel of Teaching Writing in English’ project among the English teachers at public and private schools. Provincial and district educational officers, and supervisors of English should present papers on this new methodology when holding conferences, seminars, and workshops, at regional education zone of each province. In this way, representatives of English teachers of each school will be trained by the educational supervisors of English and controlled by Thai and native professors in TEFL writing skills, so that those key personnel can assist other English teachers at their school. Besides, this procedure should include producing the teacher or trainee’s kit as a guide for teacher trainers containing lesson planning and other teaching procedures.

As a new trend and innovation in EFL learning and teaching in Thai context, this research will hopefully be a guide in developing English teachers for the development of writing instruction for upgrading the learners’ proficiency and learning outcomes.