

ABSTRACT

This study looked for the benefits of using an online keypal project to help improve students' communicative competence during an eight week period. In this study, there were 10 Matayom 5 (year 12) Annualsilpa school students (five males and five females aged 17-18) who constitute one whole class and they were the volunteers. The timed essays as a class assignment was used as pre and post test to give some vindication of the benefits of using an online keypal project to help develop students' communicative competence based on the Systemic Functional Grammar framework by M.A.K. Halliday which sees language first and foremost as a system of communication and analyzes grammar to discover how it is organized to allow writers to make and exchange meaning through the texts. Also, emails from students when they interacted with their American keepals during the project were used to investigate the development of students' communicative as there were real readers and giving some purposes to their writing.

The overall results have shown that interactions from the real readers affected the development of students' writing which were thematic development, sentence structure and their ability to express ideas and feelings. These have been shown in the students' post-test after eight weeks of communicating with the real reader. This study may help to promote the use of an online keypal project as a student's writing assignment to improve their writing and communicating skills. Since the students realized writing is one kind of communications they should be able to write to reach their communicative goals.

In addition, the findings have shown that motivation is one of the factors that affected the level of students' writing ability. It can go up and down any time depending on their level of interest. Therefore, having a real reader can help them to engage with their writing activity.