A Study of English Writing Skills by Using the Context Method for Grade 8 Students at Secondary School, Magway Region, Myanmar

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to: 1) study the use of the Context Method in developing English writing skills among Grade 8 students at Secondary School in Magway Region, Myanmar; 2) to develop English writing instruction using the Context Method for Grade 8 students; 3) to test the effectiveness of the Context Method in enhancing students' writing performance in English; and 4) to evaluate students' learning outcomes and satisfaction with the Context Method in English writing classes. The study was conducted with 40 Grade 8 students from a Secondary School in the Magway Region. The methodology used was Research and Development (R&D), focusing on the systematic creation and evaluation of instructional strategies using the Context Method. The research tools consisted of lesson plans using the Context Method, a teacher's manual, pre-test and post-test for English writing, a student satisfaction questionnaire, and an observation checklist. These instruments were used to assess coherence, vocabulary use, grammar, fluency, and mechanics in students' writing. The data were analyzed using percentage, mean, and standard deviation through Microsoft Office Excel. The results revealed that students' average scores significantly improved after using the Context Method, with mean scores in the writing test increasing from 2.05 to 4.65 and standard deviations reducing from 0.74 to 0.42. The findings indicate that students preferred the Context Method and found it effective in enhancing their English writing skills.

Keywords: context method; English writing skills; Grade 8 students; secondary school; Myanmar

Introduction

Mastery of the English language is essential in today's global society, as it serves as a gateway to accessing knowledge, international communication, and future academic or career opportunities. English is the primary language in more than 85% of scientific and academic publications, making it a vital tool for learning and intellectual advancement (Halim, 1999:1). In an increasingly interconnected world, English proficiency enables individuals to participate in global discussions and access diverse sources of information. In Myanmar, English has long been a core subject from primary through tertiary education, playing a crucial role in developing students' communication and literacy skills.

However, the effectiveness of English instruction heavily depends on the teaching methods employed. Brown (2001) noted that different approaches can be applied to language education, such as the Direct Method (DM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and Task-Based Learning (TBL). These methods prioritize authentic language use and learner-centered activities. The Context Method, which is the focus of this study, emphasizes teaching language through meaningful, real-life situations that students can relate to, allowing learners to acquire vocabulary, grammar, and discourse skills in a natural and engaging way.

In the Myanmar context, especially at the secondary school level, many students struggle with English writing due to a lack of contextual and practical application in the classroom. Traditional grammar-translation methods often result in rote learning, which fails to develop students' ability to use English effectively for written communication. As writing is one of the most complex and productive language skills, it requires a deeper understanding of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, coherence, and mechanics. Therefore, there is a need for innovative strategies that not only engage students but also improve their practical writing competence.

At Secondary School in Magway Region, educators have recognized that students require more interactive and meaningful approaches to improve their English writing skills. The Context Method offers a promising alternative by embedding writing tasks in realistic and familiar scenarios, helping learners to develop ideas more naturally and organize

their thoughts coherently. This method encourages students to draw from their personal experiences and daily lives, thereby making writing more relatable, purposeful, and enjoyable.

Moreover, teachers play a crucial role in facilitating the Context Method. By providing guided writing tasks, timely feedback, and supportive scaffolding, teachers can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses in writing. Such support contributes to a more learner-centered environment, where students feel confident to express themselves in written English. The integration of contextual learning into the writing classroom not only enhances language proficiency but also supports critical thinking, creativity, and communicative competence.

Given the increasing need for effective English instruction in Myanmar, this study aims to explore how the Context Method can be applied to develop English writing skills among Grade 8 students. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to more effective pedagogical practices and better writing outcomes for secondary school students in the region.

Research Objectives

1. To study the effectiveness of the Context Method in enhancing English writing skills for Grade 8 students at a secondary school in Magway Region, Myanmar.
2. To analyze improvements in students' English writing skills after applying the Context Method.
3. To investigate students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning English writing skills through the Context Method.

Literature Review

The Context Method is an instructional approach that emphasizes teaching language-particularly writing-through real-life, meaningful, and situational contexts that reflect students' everyday experiences. This method aligns with communicative and functional models of language learning, wherein language acquisition is not isolated from use but is embedded in actual communicative situations. By connecting written tasks to authentic scenarios, the Context Method enables students to understand how and when to use language structures meaningfully and appropriately.

The theoretical foundations of the Context Method are closely related to several key perspectives in language learning. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory highlights the importance of social interaction and cultural context in the learning process. According to this theory, students develop their language abilities more effectively when learning is situated in familiar social settings and guided through scaffolding by more knowledgeable others (teachers or peers). This aligns directly with the Context Method, where writing is rooted in learners' social environments and real-life experiences.

Additionally, Krashen's Input Hypothesis supports the use of comprehensible input—language that is slightly above the learner's current level and delivered in a meaningful context. The Context Method naturally supports this by offering content that is both familiar and incrementally challenging. When students engage in contextual writing, they receive input that is relevant and accessible, facilitating language acquisition.

Jean Piaget's Constructivist Theory also underpins the Context Method. It posits that learners construct knowledge through active engagement with their environment. Writing within a meaningful context allows learners to build understanding by relating new knowledge to their prior experiences, thus reinforcing retention and application of language structures. Furthermore, Malcolm Knowles' Theory of Andragogy, although initially focused on adult learners, supports the idea that students are more motivated when learning is task-oriented and based on real-life situations—core elements of the Context Method.

Research on contextual learning has shown its effectiveness in enhancing writing performance. Students who are given writing tasks embedded in real-life settings tend to demonstrate improved coherence, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy. Such tasks encourage learners to think critically, organize their ideas more logically, and write with a clear purpose. Moreover, contextual learning environments increase student motivation, engagement, and autonomy, which are essential for developing strong writing skills.

In summary, the Context Method integrates linguistic theory with practical pedagogy by situating writing instruction in meaningful, real-world contexts. Supported by multiple theoretical frameworks—including those of Vygotsky, Krashen, Piaget, and Knowles—this approach is particularly effective for secondary-level learners who benefit from interactive, student-centered writing tasks. As such, it holds significant promise for improving the English writing skills of Grade 8 students in Myanmar's secondary schools.

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework aims to guide the investigation and development of English writing skills through the use of the Context Method for Grade 8 students at Secondary School in Magway Region, Myanmar. The objectives of this framework are as follows:

1. To study the problems related to English writing skills in the English class of Grade 8 students at Secondary School in Magway Region, Myanmar;
2. To develop writing instruction using the Context Method to enhance English writing skills among Grade 8 students;
3. To test the effectiveness of the Context Method in improving English writing skills in the English class of Grade 8 students; and
4. To evaluate the effectiveness and student satisfaction with the Context Method as a tool to enhance English writing skills in the English class of Grade 8 students at Secondary School in Magway Region, Myanmar.

This framework supports the integration of contextual, meaningful, and student-centered writing activities that reflect real-life communication and foster improved coherence, vocabulary use, grammar, fluency, and mechanics in students' writing performance.
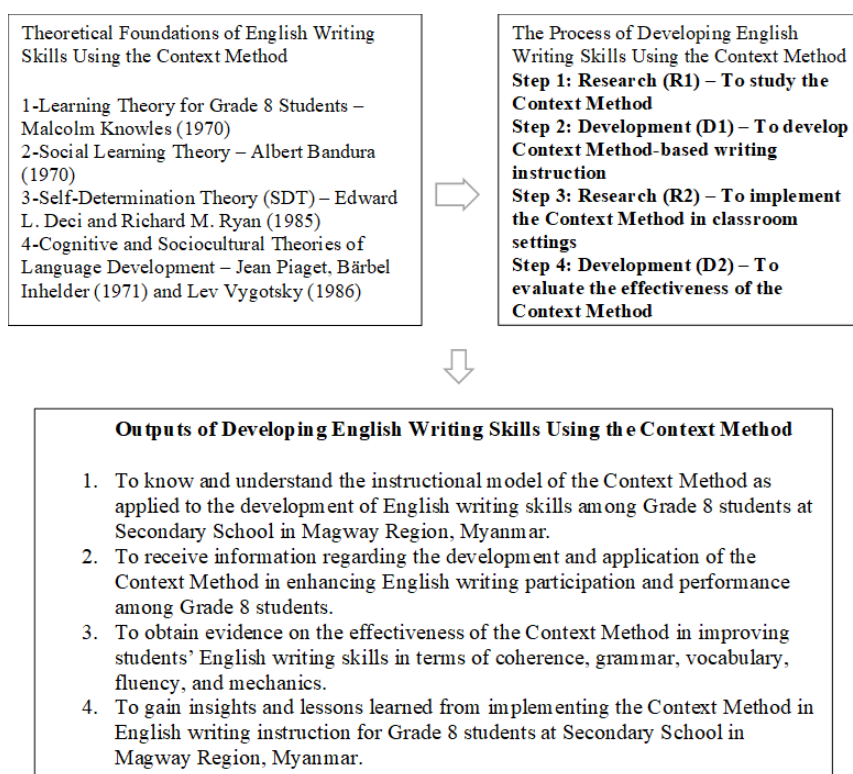
Research Methodology

The present study focuses on the development of English writing skills among Grade 8 students by using the Context Method at a Secondary School in Magway Region, Myanmar. The researcher designed and implemented a Context Method-based instructional model to examine its effectiveness in enhancing students' writing abilities. The study employed the Research and Development (R&D) approach, incorporating a one-group pre-test and post-test design to assess student performance before and after the intervention. The research aimed to evaluate writing improvements in areas such as coherence, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and mechanics.

The research design is outlined as follows:

Step 1: Research (R1) – *To study the Context Method*
(Analysis: A)

This step involved analyzing existing problems in students' English writing performance and reviewing literature on context-based writing instruction to inform the development of the intervention.

Step 2: Development (D1) – *To develop writing instruction using the Context Method*
(Design and Development: D&D)

The researcher created a series of writing lesson plans and instructional materials based on real-life contexts and aligned with the learning needs of Grade 8 students. These resources were piloted and refined with expert input.

Step 3: Research (R2) – *To experiment with the Context Method in classroom instruction*
(Implementation: I)

The developed writing lessons were implemented in an actual Grade 8 English class. Pre-test and post-test writing assessments were conducted to measure the effectiveness of the intervention in improving students' writing skills.

Step 4: Development (D2) – *To evaluate the effectiveness and satisfaction of the Context Method*
(Evaluation: E)

In this final phase, the results of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using statistical methods (mean, percentage, and standard deviation). Student feedback was also collected through questionnaires to assess satisfaction with the Context Method.

This methodology enabled the researcher to examine how writing instruction grounded in contextually meaningful tasks could support English language development in Myanmar's secondary school context.

Objective 1: The results showed that

The research results are presented as follows.

Development of Lesson Plans Using the Context Method

Lesson plans for writing instruction using the Context Method were developed based on a learner-centered approach, integrating real-life situations to foster students' writing skills. The researcher designed the lesson plans to focus on the writing process—pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing—within meaningful contexts relevant to the students' daily lives. Writing topics included descriptions of people, places, daily routines, school activities, and personal experiences. These were sequenced according to curriculum objectives and aligned with Grade 8 English writing standards.

The researcher adopted the Context Method by serving dual roles: a facilitator of content (real-life scenarios) and a language instructor guiding students in developing coherent and grammatically correct paragraphs. Students were encouraged to actively participate in writing tasks that required reflection, creativity, and clarity. The course was structured into 15 sessions, each with targeted learning objectives, writing tasks, peer review, and formative assessment. Teaching materials, such as worksheets, topic prompts, and sample writings, were contextualized and adjusted to meet the students' comprehension levels.

The results of lesson plan applicability before implementation are shown below:

Applicability for Use	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Learning Objectives			
1. Emphasize development of English writing competence	4.00	0.00	High
2. Emphasize writing in context and communicative situations	5.00	0.00	Very High
Content Knowledge			
3. Content is comprehensible and age-appropriate	4.00	0.00	High
4. Content is directly related to students' daily experiences	4.33	0.58	High
Learning Activities			
5. Writing activities are varied and engaging	4.33	0.58	High
6. Activities stimulate student interest and participation	4.00	0.00	High
7. English is consistently used in activities	4.67	0.58	Very High
Teaching Aids			
8. Visual and contextual aids are diverse	4.33	0.58	High
9. All materials support writing in English	4.67	0.58	Very High
Assessment			
10. Assessment tools are clear and consistent	4.33	0.58	High

11. Assessment provides feedback on writing improvement	4.33	0.58	High
Overall Integration			
12. All components are well aligned in lesson plans	4.33	0.58	High

Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Context Method

Students' Perceptions	X	S.D.	Interpretation
Effective Instructional Methodology			
1. Context-based writing instruction improves performance	4.16	0.60	High
2. English writing instructions are understandable	4.42	0.51	High
3. Instructor communicates clearly in English	4.53	0.51	Very High
4. Writing tasks are meaningful and purposeful	4.11	0.46	High
5. Writing strategies are systematic and supportive	4.53	0.70	Very High
6. Writing assessment is consistent and useful	3.79	0.71	High
7. English is used as the medium of instruction	4.42	0.61	High
Opportunities to Use English			
8. Students frequently practice writing during the course	4.16	0.69	High
9. Students are encouraged to express themselves in writing	4.21	0.71	High
10. English writing is emphasized throughout the program	4.37	0.60	High

Total Mean Score: X = 4.27, S.D. = 0.38 ⟶ High Level

The findings indicate that students perceived the Context Method as a highly effective instructional strategy. It provided meaningful opportunities for practicing English writing, improved their ability to write in context, and fostered confidence in their writing skills.

Objective 2 and 3: The effectiveness of the Context Method in developing English writing skills

Table 2 shows that students perceived the effectiveness of the Context Method at a high level (X = 4.27, S.D. = 0.38). In particular, they rated the Context Method as both an effective instructional strategy and a helpful approach for generating opportunities to practice English writing. Specifically, the perceived effectiveness of the method itself was rated at X = 4.28 (S.D. = 0.36), while the usefulness in generating writing opportunities was rated at X = 4.25 (S.D. = 0.49). Students also noted that the learning experience was enjoyable and provided frequent opportunities to develop their writing, which positively influenced their attitudes and increased their confidence to express ideas through writing.

Effects of the Context Method on English Writing Performance

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Context Method, English writing performance tests were administered before and after the intervention. The pre-test and post-test were validated by three experts using the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC), all exceeding 0.60. A pilot study was conducted with non-target participants, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.80, indicating high reliability.

The same group of students completed both pre-tests and post-tests. A dependent sample t-test was used to compare writing performance scores before and after the implementation. Assumption checking confirmed normal distribution, no missing data, and no significant outliers. Thus, all statistical procedures met the required conditions for validity.

Table 3. English Writing Performance Before and After Using the Context Method

English Writing Performance	Total Score	X	S.D.	t-test	Sig (p < 0.05)
Pre-test	50	23.75	4.82		
Post-test	50	38.64	4.17	18.45*	0.00

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

According to Table 3, the mean score increased from 23.75 to 38.64 after using the Context Method. This shows a statistically significant improvement in students' English writing performance. Key areas of improvement included idea organization, vocabulary variety, sentence structure, and use of correct grammar and mechanics.

Skill-Specific Analysis of English Writing Components

To analyze progress in more detail, sub-skill performance—such as coherence, grammar usage, vocabulary selection, and mechanics—was evaluated separately. The results showed the greatest improvement in coherence and organization, followed by vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. This suggests that writing in familiar and meaningful contexts helped students logically arrange ideas and express themselves more clearly.

Main Findings and Interpretation

The findings demonstrate that the Context Method is an effective instructional approach for improving English writing skills. Students performed significantly better in their post-test after experiencing contextualized writing instruction. This aligns with prior research by Adawiyah (2018), Stoller (2002), Corrales and Maloof (2009), and Dupuy (2002), who affirmed that context-based learning provides meaningful practice opportunities, encourages language use, and improves overall language performance. The method also supported motivational factors and allowed students to connect writing tasks with real-life experiences, which fostered deeper engagement and skill development.

This study echoes the findings of Punthumasen (2007), who observed that lack of motivation and uninteresting classroom instruction often hinder English development. By contrast, the Context Method created a dynamic and student-centered environment where learners were consistently engaged through relevant and enjoyable writing tasks.

Discussions

It can be concluded that the implementation of the Context Method contributed significantly to the improvement of English writing skills among Grade 8 students at Secondary School in Magway Region, Myanmar. The study demonstrated that writing performance improved substantially when students were exposed to contextualized tasks that reflected real-life situations. These tasks enhanced students' ability to organize their ideas, apply vocabulary effectively, and use correct grammar and mechanics in written communication.

The findings confirm that the Context Method is not only an effective instructional strategy but also a motivating factor in classroom learning. Writing tasks embedded in meaningful contexts gave students greater opportunities to practice and apply their language skills. This confirms that teaching writing without meaningful practice and real-life relevance is insufficient. Frequent writing opportunities, grounded in personal or social relevance, promote better retention, creativity, and expression.

To successfully implement the Context Method in writing instruction, teachers must play a proactive role. They should incorporate authentic contexts, design engaging writing activities, and provide supportive feedback to encourage participation. The classroom environment should foster confidence and creativity by involving students in discussions, real-world writing prompts, collaborative writing, peer reviews, and reflective writing tasks. These techniques create a dynamic space where English is used purposefully, and writing becomes a tool for communication rather than just an academic exercise.

However, this study was conducted on a relatively small sample in one secondary school. For broader validation, future research should be conducted on a larger scale across different school settings. A comparative study using control and experimental groups would also strengthen the evidence and ensure that the Context Method consistently leads to improved writing performance in diverse learning environments.

Knowledge from Research

Identify the body of knowledge that is the result of research. Synthesis in the form of diagrams, charts or concept maps with a concise, easy-to-understand format/structure description.
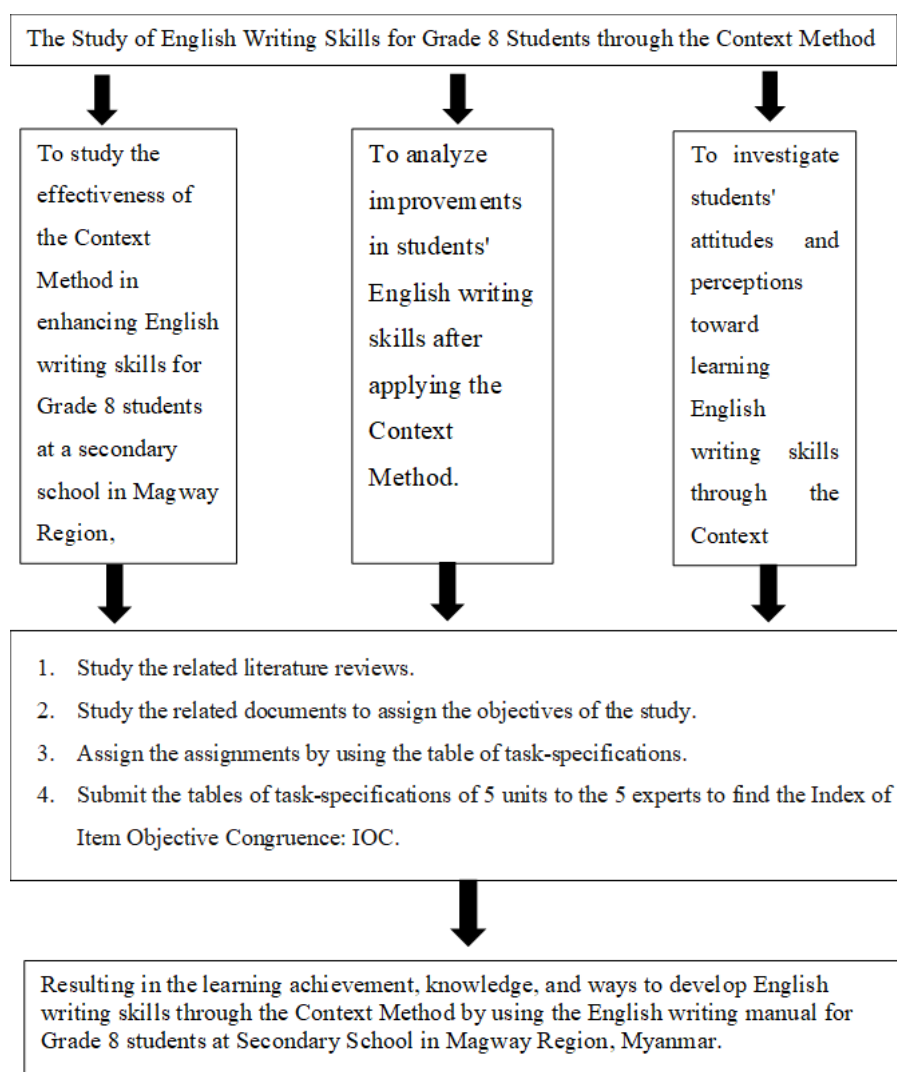
Conclusion

The analysis of the instructional model based on the Context Method revealed that students significantly benefited from contextualized English writing instruction. Writing tasks designed around familiar topics—such as daily routines, school events, and personal experiences—resulted in increased participation, clearer idea organization, and improved grammar and vocabulary use.

The effectiveness of the Context Method was also reflected in the evaluation of writing tasks. For example:

Unit 1 (descriptive writing): 94% task accuracy

Unit 2 (fill-in-the-blank and sentence building): 90% accuracy

Unit 3 (writing with listening integration): 93% accuracy

Unit 4 (synonym usage and writing): 91% accuracy

Unit 5 (antonym recognition and sentence writing): 93% accuracy

These results confirm that contextual writing instruction supports not only grammatical competence but also overall writing fluency and clarity.

Suggestions

1. Use of Guided Discovery: The Context Method aligns well with guided discovery techniques, where students explore language use through real-life examples and writing situations. Teachers should structure lessons to allow for exploration and reflection.

2. Apply Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): CLT strategies, such as pair writing, peer feedback, and collaborative projects, can be integrated with the Context Method to enhance interaction and writing authenticity.

3. Adapt Instruction to Changing Student Interests: As students' interests evolve, teachers must continually revise writing topics and prompts to ensure they remain relevant and engaging.

4. Focus on Professional Development: Teachers should receive training in both the Context Method and CLT strategies to improve their ability to facilitate writing instruction effectively.

5. Incorporate Technology: Future research and classroom practice should explore how digital tools-such as writing apps, collaborative platforms, and AI-based feedback-can support context-based writing instruction and assessment.

6. Expand Research Scope: It is recommended that future studies be conducted using a larger sample, across multiple schools, with control and experimental group designs to confirm the broader effectiveness of the Context Method.

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