

Development of an English Writing Model: A Guide to Self-Directed Learning for Local Food Product Entrepreneur

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyse local food product labelling and information and to develop a writing model focusing on local food product labelling and information. Ten entrepreneurs in one province in the south of Thailand selling local food products were selected. The research employed the quantitative research approach which involved three phases of data collection. In phase one, a questionnaire was employed to gain data necessary for the development of a writing model and to study local food products and labelling of 10 local food products in the selected province. Phase two involved the development of a writing model in which document analysis was employed to strengthen the content included in the writing model. In phase three, a satisfaction questionnaire was utilized as an additional data to adjust the writing model and confirm its usage. The study revealed that the participating entrepreneurs placed an importance on English food labelling. Consequently, the writing model was developed to meet the needs of the participants. The components of the writing model included four major units of information which were product safety, product value, product advertising, and product reliability and warranty. In each unit, crucial information was provided to allow users to study relevant information and related food vocabularies by following the step-by-step information in a form of Thai-English translation. Along with the information provided, the writing model presented a process of writing which can enable the users to develop their product labelling in English.

Keywords: English writing model, food entrepreneur, local food product, self-directed learning

1. Introduction

Increasing selling limits is a priority goal for all business entrepreneurs while promoting products internationally is seen to be another best way to increase sales. It can thus be suggested that a precise and more than one language product labelling is useful as this can promote product not only in the country but to overseas. By this the government has placed its importance on strengthening the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) including giving given high priority to create high-value added products as according to the Government Public Relations Department (2015).

Promoting products through various channels is seen to be another best way to increase sales. This is in accordance with the Thai Department of Business Development (2016). It has introduced the two ways for business expansion through 1) extending product line or creating new product, and 2) expanding into new territories. While extending new product line may seem appropriate for a large business, the second channel might be suitable for small and medium enterprises by marketing and selling existing products to new customers. In addition, the Thai government has set vision in the year 2015-2020 as “Stability, Prosperity, and Sustainability”, which is based on His Majesty the King’s Sufficiency Economy Philosophy to build strength from within, at the individual, community and society levels. By this the government has placed its importance on strengthening the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) including giving given high priority to create high-value added products as according to the Government Public Relations Department (2015).

It can be seen that the Thai government encourages and promotes business in both goods and service nationally

and internationally and one of its overseas missions is to promote and accelerate exports (Ministry of Commerce, 2015). Therefore, having quality products, particularly, having a precise and more than one language product labelling is useful as this can promote product not only in the country but to overseas. According to the literatures, the use of pictures, logo, and information on a food label can promote the product to market (Cheewaree, 2012; Jongkol, 2015). This is in accordance with the work by Kumtrakul (2016). It is noted that a food label draw affecting customers' decision to purchase products. In addition, the label should be designed to appeal the customers and its labelling aspects will help consumers to examine products (Ourairat, 2016; Bandara, De Silva, Maduwanthi, and Warunasinghe, 2016).

As the country promotes the increasing sales of SMEs, each province in Thailand has aimed to boost up their business. The selected province, a province in the upper south of Thailand, responses to the country mission by setting up their province mission to develop local products to meet the standard, especially Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN standard (Surat Thani Provincial Office, 2017) by having their products and its labelling written in English which is an international language among ASEAN countries and worldwide.

So, a food label is seen to enable business to gain more new customers who can be in different segments or niches or in different locations around the country or the globe. While having an English labelling might increase the sell limits, some local business entrepreneurs in Thailand have shown less interest to provide the additional language to their food product labelling due to their limitation of both time and English proficiency. It can be said that effective English communication is resulted in success on occupation. Therefore, the English writing model was developed as a supplementary to promote a food labelling written in English. This should enhance local business to expand their business to new customers where English is used as a medium of communication and promote their products that meet the international standard. Specifically, this research consisted of two purposes: 1) to analyse local food product labelling and information, and 2) to develop a writing model focusing on local food product labelling and information.

The research process in this study was based on research and development in which the researchers analyse primarily on local food products in the selected province. Data obtained were later used to develop a writing model which can be used as a guideline to add English language to their food product labelling. This study is presented based on the following framework (see Figure 1). In this research, all four types of writing are employed to create a model as they are seen as useful components of a model. A writing model aims to focus and promote the local products of the entrepreneurs. Therefore, the expository writing is used to give facts and information of the products, the narrative style is employed to give the story the products, the descriptive style is used to give impression and enhance the story of products, and the last one, the persuasive style is used to ensure that the products are of interest.

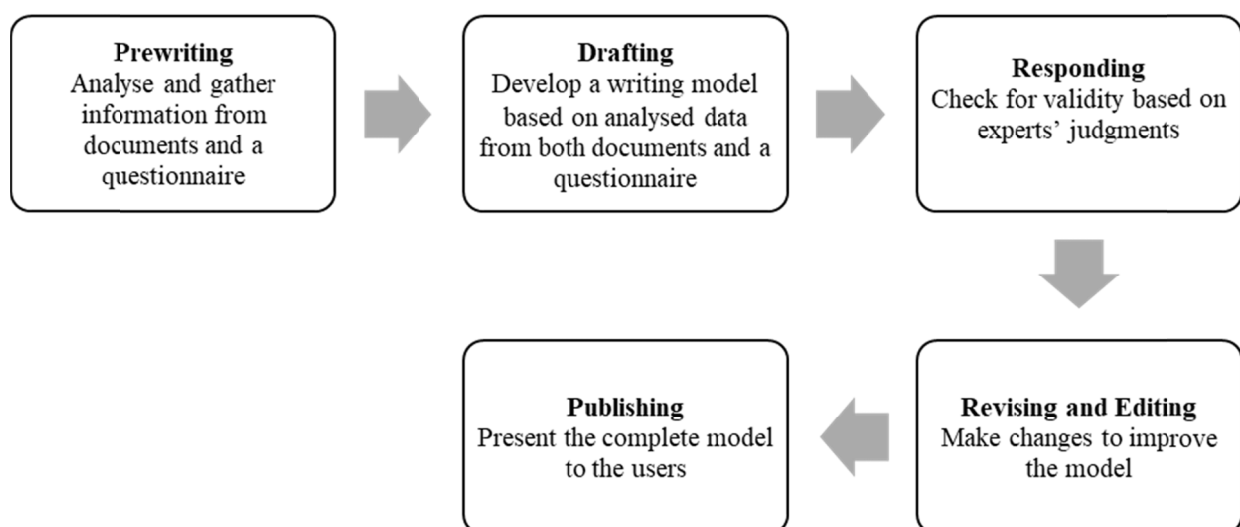


Figure 1. Development of an English writing model

In this study, local food products in one province in the southern Thailand were selected and studied along with

related documents and a questionnaire. This information was used to as a preliminary data to develop a model. It was expected that the users can use this model as a guideline to develop their own English food product labelling. It is believed that the use of this writing model can promote self-directed learning of the users as they can study and develop their English label on their own. This accords with the literature, which showed that the learners are the centre of the context so they control and direct their own learning tasks to meet their own demands (Geng, Law, & Niu, 2019; Morris, 2019). The writing model, in the study, is presented according to the functional model of language so that the users can achieve their intended purpose with specific functions to communicate their ideas which is creating their English label.

2. Method

2.1 Quantitative Research Approach

In the current study, the quantitative research approach was chosen as the appropriate method to provide the deep understanding and explanation of the research context. Concerning the quantitative research approach, statistics, content analysis, validity, and reliability are involved focusing on social behaviour that can be quantifiable and generalizable (Bryman, 2012; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Mertens, 2005; Payne & Payne, 2004; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). This approach allows the researcher gain factual data without or less bias or error by distancing themselves from the contexts (Barnham, 2015; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Tools used in the study include a questionnaire, a writing model, and a satisfaction questionnaire.

2.2 Research Procedure

The current study began in late 2019 which involved three phases of data collection. Phase one employed a questionnaire as the main investigating tool to study local food products and labelling of selected 10 local food products in the province in the south of Thailand. Phase two involved the development of a writing model focusing on product labelling and information. Phase three utilized a satisfaction questionnaire asking users who were local entrepreneurs to rate their opinion towards the writing model (see Table 1).

Table 1. Research procedure

Phase	Approach	Time	Method	Data collection focus
1	Questionnaire	August-November 2019	IOC	Demographic data and information of local food products
2	Develop a writing model	November-February 2020	IOC Document analysis	Study, analyse, and develop details necessary for the writing model
3	Satisfaction questionnaire	March 2020	IOC	Opinion towards the writing model usage

2.2.1 Phase One

In the first phase of this study, a questionnaire was used as a main investigating tool. The questionnaire comprised three sections. Section 1 was basic information of respondents (ex. sex, age, job), in a form of check list and adding information. Section 2 asked about their needs for development of a writing model (ex. labelling and information), in a form of checklist. Section 3 was an open-ended form which allows respondents to recommend further useful information for the study. A questionnaire was created and validated by three experts using an evaluation form for a questionnaire. Analysed data were used to develop a writing model in Phase Two.

2.2.2 Phase Two

In phase two, data obtained from the first phase and document analysis were the main tools to develop a writing model. Then a writing model was validated by three experts using an evaluation form to ensure that the model responses and assists the users. The writing model was then revised and edited which can be categorised into four units.

Unit 1 Information for Product Safety

- Focusing on how to write information about manufactured date, expiry date, storage, cooking, warnings

Unit 2 Information for Product Value

- Focusing on how to write information about type of food, ingredients, and food quantity

Unit 3 Information for Product Advertising

- Focusing on how to write information about keywords to advertise the product

Unit 4 Information for Product Reliability and Warranty

- Focusing on how to write information about food brand, name and address of the manufacturer, distributor, importer, FDA approval logo and related logo.

2.2.3 Phase Three

In phase three, a satisfaction questionnaire was employed to confirm the writing model usage. Items that used a five-point Likert-type scale were ranging from 1= very low to 5= very high. Therefore, the interpretation of these responses range of five levels of frequency as detailed below:

Mean range	Meaning
4.21-5.00	Very High
3.41-4.20	High/ Above Average
2.61-3.40	Average
1.81-2.60	Below Average
1.00-1.80	Very Low

This satisfaction questionnaire was validated by three experts using an evaluation form to ensure the validity before distributing to the users.

2.3 Quality of Research Instruments

Step one: The questionnaires in Phase One and Phase Three along with the writing model were presented to the group of experts (three experts) for any suggestions for improvement.

Step two: The questionnaires and the writing model were corrected and adjusted in accordance with comments and recommendations made by experts.

Step three: After receiving feedback and recommendations, the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was used so as to find the content validity. In this process, the questionnaires as well as the writing model were checked by three experts. The Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was used to evaluate the items of the questionnaire based on the score range from -1 to +1.

Congruent = + 1

Questionable = 0

Incongruent = -1

The items that had scores lower than 0.5 were revised. On the other hand, the items that had scores higher than or equal to 0.5 were reserved.

2.4 Selection of Participants

Participants were selected based on a purposive sampling method as they were the right persons who can give detailed and meaningful information (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). Participants were a group of entrepreneurs (10 participants) who sell local food products in one province of Thailand.

2.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data obtained from questionnaires was analysed by using Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). Document analysis was used to supplement the data obtained from questionnaires.

3. Results

According to the FAO (2016), a food labelling policy is set to support healthy diets of the consumers by providing information about the qualities of foods; drawing consumer attention to the potential benefits and risks of particular food products and motivating manufacturers to produce healthy and safe foods. There are many types of food which include whole foods, simple processes foods, and highly-processed food products and its label information like 1) whole foods which include grains, beans and legumes, nuts and seeds (not salted), fruits and vegetables, 2) simple processed foods which are cheese, bread, noodles, tomato sauce, meat products, 3) highly-processed food products like packaged soups, biscuits, crisps/chips. soft drinks, chips, chocolate, candy, ice-cream, sweetened breakfast cereals, and chicken nuggets, hotdogs. Based on the food products of participants, at the time of the study, their products were local food products which three main major types of

food. Their products were various including oyster chili sauce, dumpling, Thai desserts, cookies, mulberry drinks, dried food products such as fried noodles or dried seafood as well as pork dishes such as simmered pork and pork knuckle. Generally, labels of local food products were mostly written in Thai while there were some products had its brand written in English. Besides, some product had its type of food written in English. Obviously, the research participants promoted the products in various types of packaging but none of them has the description in English. In addition, some of the products did not represent any information whether in Thai or in English.

The data obtained from the research participants who were a group of entrepreneurs indicated that they were all female and their ages were varied ranging between 41-50 years (50%), followed by aged between 31-40 years old (30%), and with 10% of them aged more than 51 years old. It appeared that the majority of them (60%) had bachelor's degree. 40% of them earned an average monthly income more than 25,000 baht (\approx 781 USD), followed by 30% with a monthly income between 10,000-20,000 baht (\approx 312-624 USD), and there were 20% of them earned a monthly income lower than 5,000 baht (\approx 156 USD).

The data obtained from the questionnaire showed the needs of participating entrepreneurs for a writing model. Contrary to the participants' perspective of the label influencing the sale, they were likely to see the importance of the label and show the needs to have an English label for their products. In addition, 80% of them asserted that they required their product brand to be written in English as well as having English product information accounted for 70%. Also, the participants mentioned that they needed their product to have both Thai and English information.

Based on the analysis of the data regarding the advertising texts appeared in the products from Part 2 of the questionnaire, it was likely that participants wanted the writing model to include advertising texts. There were a number of advertising texts considered useful for the participants. As they were all local food products, the participants required English advertising texts for the words "tasty" (20.7%) and "local product" (20.7%). This is followed by "No chemical" (17.2%), and "No MSG" (10.3%). The participants, in addition, noted "Nutrient-dense", "Clean", and "Healthy" as important with the same percentage at 6.9%, while the words "New", "Fresh", and "Natural" are at the same percentage of 3.4% as can be seen in the Figure 2 below.

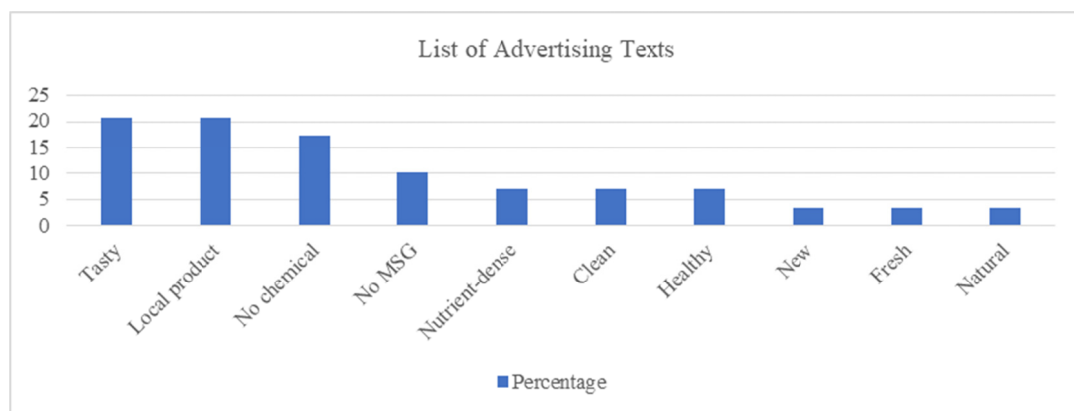


Figure 2. List of advertising texts

The analysed data came from a satisfaction questionnaire which can be seen as the crucial information to improve the writing model of the study. It reveals three aspects of users' satisfaction namely 1) a writing form, 2) contents, and 3) usability. The overall satisfaction level was very high with the mean scores at 4.52 out of 5.

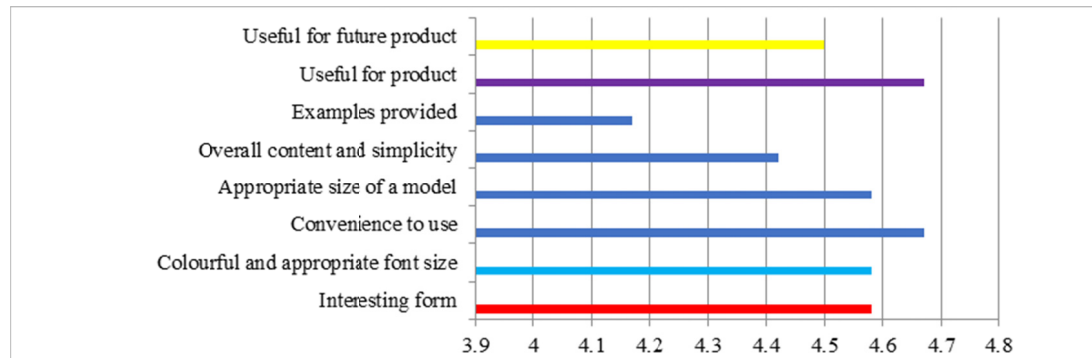


Figure 3. Overall entrepreneurs' satisfaction for the writing model

According to Figure 3, the data shows the distribution of reported overall a writing model satisfaction for entrepreneurs. The data can be grouped into two levels as the participants rated their satisfaction towards the components of the writing model 7 out of 8 as very high and 1 component as high. The participants rated the writing model for both of its usefulness and its convenience to use very high at 4.67. These are followed by its interesting form, colourful and appropriate font, as well as appropriate size of the writing model at the very high level with the total means scores at 4.58. The participating users, in addition, stated that they could apply it as a model to improve their future products ($\bar{x} = 4.50$). The figure also illustrates the participants rated the overall content of the writing model as very high ($\bar{x} = 4.42$). Lastly, the data revealed that the examples provided were highly prepared ($\bar{x} = 4.17$).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Basic Information and Local Food Products

The study found that all of the participating entrepreneurs were female with 60% of them had bachelor's degrees. It is stated that the majority of them earned a monthly income more than 25,000 baht (≈ 781 USD) which were seen to be above average of GDP per Capita at around 20,000 baht (≈ 625 USD) per month as according to the Thailand Board of Investment or BOI (BOI, 2020). This data appears to indicate that participants were likely to promote their products effectively. However, it is unexpected to note that in all 10 cases of this study, two of them earned the money less than 5,000 baht (≈ 156 USD) per month. As English is generally considered as the language for business, it is likely that they can earn more money by improving their product label (Bohara, 2018; Crystal, 2003).

4.2 Development of a Writing Model as a Guide to Self-directed Learning

On the section 2 of the questionnaire, it appears that 6 out of 10 cases did not see the benefits of English label to increase their sales. This data seems against the literature where labels are seen important from a business perspective. Having clear labels enables consumers to purchase product effectively and this could stimulate growth in food sector (FAO, 2016). This result can be explained that even though some of products did not have a clear label, they could sell their products and they had earned income quite high. As a result, they might not see how having an English label could increase the sales. Although participants were likely to pay less attention on the benefits of labels on their product sales, they showed a strong desire to have an English label for their products. This contrastive idea maybe based on their visual perception as one respondent mentioned in the questionnaire that having an English label will make their product label look complete. However, it is undeniable that an English label is seen as a communicating tool where producers convey meaning whether its quality and quantity through writing. Therefore, it is encouraging that all participants wanted to have a food label written in English.

As it was stated that ““Label” means any tag, brand, mark, pictorial or other descriptive matter...” (FAO, 2016, p. 2), so there were 80% of the participants mentioned the needs to have their brand in English name. In addition, they asserted the requirement for product information to be appeared on their label in both Thai and English languages. This is in accordance with a business perspective focusing on a great impact of food labelling towards consumers, especially purchasing decision of the consumers. These factors include whether the product identifies the expiry date, the nutritional composition or any legal requirement (Bandara, De Silva, Maduwanthi, & Warunasinghe, 2016).

While a labelling policy has been created to support healthy diet of consumers, all information appeared on a

label is considered significant to avoid any risk of miscommunication (DIP, 2016; FAO, 2016). As a result, one of the essential components of a label or advertising text should be a non-misleading information. According to the Department of Industrial Promotion of Thailand or DIP (2016), advertising texts are required to appear on a label to give consumers' necessary information. Therefore, the writing model of the study was developed based on this guideline and policy.

A food labelling policy is seen necessary as the consumer cannot detect the quality and quantity of the foods by themselves so they require a food label that appears on a food product whether they are packaged in bags, boxes, or bottles. It is crucial to promote and share information where producers can provide exact information where the truthfulness of information on a food label is the thing that the food producer should provide for the consumer through various written information to introduce the product whether its taste, smell, or texture and to make proper use of products (FAO, 2010). Clearly, having a keyword to promote local food products were required by all participants. According to the obtained data, advertising texts that most of the participants listed "tasty" and "local product" as the most significant words. As this study focuses on local food products, the participants highly paid attention to their products and concerned what to be appeared on their products.

After gaining data from participants, the researchers analysed related documents to develop the writing model. As according to the literature, the required and necessary information that should be appeared on a label includes statement of identity (name of food), net quantity of content statement (amount of product), name and address of the manufacturer, packer or distributor, ingredient list (including food additives and allergenic information), special storage information or conditions of use, instruction for use and date marking (DIP, 2016; FAO, 2016; FDA, 2013). This information was used as a guideline to develop the writing model of the study.

In this research, the authors aimed to develop a useful guide that participating entrepreneurs as an adult learner can take control of their own learning as self-directed learning is a process that can help the learners learn the content independently (Zainuddin, Habiburrahim, Muluk, & Keumala, 2019; Wijaya & Khoiriyah, 2021). According to Loeng (2020), the concept of self-directed learning is seen as an important part in this research as it helps forming the knowledge about food label of the entrepreneur who are the users. As English is not their official language, the participants are allowed to practice the language skill autonomously everywhere and anytime to develop the English label for their product with the ready to use material in the form of a small book. As indicated in the questionnaire, their personal goal is to have an English label for their products, with the writing model they will be able to follow step-by-step process to create their own label.

All information and patterns were designed by the researchers aiming to facilitate the users to develop their product label and related information. This writing model conforms to the pattern of labelling policy. Also, the model employed a narrative writing style where the users can follow the details in a sequence with a definite beginning, middle and end (Bow Valley College, 2016). It can be seen from the contents regarding to the needs of the participants and food labelling policy which include 4 major units: Unit 1 Information for Product Safety; Unit 2 Information for Product Value; Unit 3 Information for Product Advertising; and Unit 4 Information for Product Reliability and Warranty.

In each unit, the users will be able to develop their product label gradually. The function of the model in each unit consists of Thai and English information in which the users can compare Thai information with written English information including related food vocabularies in which expository writing and descriptive writing were used to introduce the main idea and develops it with facts and supporting details including the story of products (Empowering Writers, 2005). By this it means that the users can learn how to write an English label by starting from giving facts and details starting from necessary vocabularies, followed by useful phrases and sentences. Then examples of labels will be introduced so the users can follow easily to create a vivid mental image, especially sights and textures (ESLFlow, 2015).

The persuasive writing style was used to convince the users with supporting details (McCay, 2016). To persuade, the design is concerned by the researchers as it well-look of the writing model including its function, and colour can make the printing more effective (Hodgson, 2007). The use of colour and picture together with English information is seen as essential components to product packaging and this could enhance market penetration (Cheewaree, 2012; Darawong, 2013). This is supported by Ourairat (2016) who found that clear and unique design of the product logo help reflects the quality of the product and represents the local wisdom and their way of life. The design, therefore, has comprised both colour and picture to draw attention of the users. At the same time, they could obtain necessary information to develop an alternative label written in English.

The writing model is considered to be effective as it was evaluated by the experts and adjusted before distributing to the users. This writing model provides instruction and contents so the users can use it easily and

effectively. Consequently, the satisfaction level of the users towards the writing model was considered to be at a very high level. The present study confirms the previous findings the development of the writing model should focus on the users (Bodnik, 2017; Hodgson, 2007; Lanigan, 2010).

5. Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas: studying a wider sample of participating entrepreneurs in order to verify the findings from this study, and comparing labelling policy of the Thailand trade partners to provide more details in the writing model.

6. Limitation of the Study

A limitation of this study is that the numbers of participants were relatively small. Therefore, findings might not represent the voice of all entrepreneurs selling local food products within each area of Thailand.

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