

การวิเคราะห์ข้อบกพร่องในการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษ ของนิสิตวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ ชั้นปีที่สอง มหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร

Error Analysis : The Investigation of Second-Year English Major Students' Paragraph Writing at Naresuan University

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 3 ประการ กล่าว คือ **ประการแรก** เพื่อตรวจสอบหาข้อบกพร่องในการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตมหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร ชั้นปีที่สอง วิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ **ประการที่สอง** เพื่อตรวจสอบว่าข้อบกพร่องที่เกิดขึ้นในการเขียนย่อหน้าของนิสิตนั้นอยู่ในระดับใด โดยใช้การแบ่งระดับข้อบกพร่องของคาร์ล เจมส์ เป็นเครื่องมือในการศึกษา และ**ประการที่สาม** เพื่อบ่งชี้ถึงสาเหตุที่เป็นไปได้ของข้อบกพร่องในงานเขียนของนิสิต ประชากร คือ นิสิตมหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร ชั้นปีที่สอง วิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ จำนวน 29 คน ที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนในรายวิชาการเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษเครื่องมือที่ใช้ คือ งานเขียนย่อหน้าภาษาอังกฤษในรูปแบบการเขียนแบบบรรยายในหัวข้อ การเดินทางที่น่าจดจำของฉัน (My memorable trip/Journey) ซึ่งเป็นงานเขียนชิ้นแรกของนิสิตในการเรียนรายวิชาดังกล่าว โดยใช้รูปแบบในการวิเคราะห์การแบ่งระดับข้อบกพร่องของคาร์ล เจมส์ จำนวน 3 ระดับ ได้แก่ ระดับคำ ระดับประโยค และระดับย่อหน้า ค่าสถิติที่ใช้ได้แก่ ค่าร้อยละ (Percentage) ผลการวิจัยพบว่า มีข้อบกพร่องเกิดขึ้นทั้งหมดจำนวน 725 ครั้ง โดยข้อบกพร่องที่เกิดขึ้นมากที่สุด คือข้อบกพร่องด้านไวยากรณ์ ซึ่งประกอบด้วยข้อบกพร่องทางด้านรูปแบบและโครงสร้างของคำ และข้อบกพร่องด้านการจัดเรียงลำดับและความสัมพันธ์ของคำต่าง ๆ ในวลีและประโยคหรือโครงสร้างของประโยค โดยสาเหตุของข้อบกพร่องเกิดจากอิทธิพลของภาษาที่หนึ่งและความสามารถที่ไม่เพียงพอในภาษาที่สอง

คำสำคัญ : การวิเคราะห์ข้อบกพร่อง ; ข้อบกพร่องระดับคำ;ข้อบกพร่องระดับประโยค ; ข้อบกพร่องระดับย่อหน้า ; สาเหตุของข้อบกพร่อง

ABSTRACT

This study aimed (1) to examine types of errors in paragraph writing of second-year English major students at Naresuan University, (2) to find out which levels of error are mostly found in students' paragraph writing by using Carl James (1998) levels of error model, and (3) to identify the plausible explanation for the errors. The populations of the study were 29 second-year English major students who enrolled in Paragraph Writing. The instrument used for collecting data was the student's narrative paragraph written in English in the topic of My Memorable Trip/Journey. The statistics used was percentage. The results showed that the most frequent error found in student's paragraph fall into grammar errors which separated into two types; morphological errors and syntax errors. The present study indicates that interference from L1 and inadequate competent of L2 are the main causes of errors.

Keywords : Error analysis ; Lexical error ; Sentence errors ; Discourse errors ; Causes of error



Introduction

At the present time, English is considered as the medium language for communication all over the world. To communicate in business, education, culture, society, even in politics, people use English as a vital tool for communication. In many countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, English is used as an official language, for example, Singapore, Malaysia, and Philippines. On the contrary, English is not used as the official language in Thailand, but it is inevitable that English has been taught widely in the country since the past until now.

English in Thailand has been viewed as a foreign language (EFL). However, English has been used in academic and occupational fields for years English instruction in Thailand, normally in primary school, secondary school, and higher education emphasizes training four skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Teachers habitually instruct the listening skill at first, and followed by speaking, reading, and then writing. Hedge stated "adults devote 45% of their energies to listening, 30% to speaking, 16% to reading, and 9% to writing". There are a number of researchers who affirmed that writing should be set at the end in teaching because of its complexity and difficulty. For example, [21] stated "Probably half of the world's population does not know how to write adequately and effectively". In the same way, [10] claimed that "The writing skill is often perceived as the most difficult language skill since it requires a higher level of productive language control than the other skills". Moreover, [57] stated "Writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners to master since the writer has to pay attention to generate, organize, and translate ideas into text".

Therefore, it is apparent that learning English as a foreign language (EFL) requires mastering all four skills, but the writing skill has always been one of the most complex and difficult language skills for second language learners to master.

Since the writing skill is not an inborn skill, it involves formulating new ideas and transforming information, which by itself is a complex process [6] Consequently, many errors are committed by second language learners in the process of mastering the English writing skill.

In the field of applied linguistics, there are many theories that try to explain errors such as Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, Error Analysis, and the Interlanguage approach [19] Error Analysis was established by Stephen Pit Corder and his colleagues in 1960s in order to answer the question of L1 and L2 acquisition process being the same or not [13] Likewise, in the process of learning the second or foreign language, creating errors are common to the learners. The errors of learners indicate both of the learner's knowledge and the way in which a second language is learned in second language learning [60] However, the meaning of errors and mistakes still ambiguous, therefore, [18] distinguished the term of errors and mistakes as follows:

"Errors reflect gaps in a learner's knowledge ; they occur because the learner does not know what is correct".

"Mistakes reflect occasional lapses in performance; they occur because, in a particular instance, the learner is unable to perform what he or she knows". [18]

In the Thai context, there are a number of studies related to identify errors in students writing, the results revealed that most Thai students still have



problems and commit errors in writing on many levels such as lexical, sentence, and discourse level [66]

In addition, there is evidences suggest that Thai people have problems with the English language. The Education Testing Service (ETS) displayed the average English skill level of Thai people measured by TOEFL iBT score ranging from 76 points to 120 points, as of the year 2013 (Test and Score Data Summary for TOEFL iBT Tests, 2013). However, when comparing Thailand with other 10 countries in ASEAN, Thailand leads only two countries: Cambodia and Laos. By the year 2015, Thailand is going to participate in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the article 34 of ASEAN charter prescribes that "The working language of ASEAN shall be English" (Asean : Web Site). It means that English must be used as an interlanguage in AEC Therefore, Thai people have to improve their English ability rapidly to participate in AEC at the end of the year 2015. Furthermore, the IELTS's annual review 2011 reported the mean overall and individual band scores (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) achieved in 2011 by academic candidates from the top 40 first language background (first language as self-chosen by candidates drawn from a wide range of nationalities), the report showed that Thai's first language academic candidates received the 5.8 score on reading, 5.9 score on listening, 5.7 score on speaking, and 5.3 score on writing [18] According to the results, the lowest score is writing. This indicates that Thais still have problems in English writing.

It can be seen that writing skill is the problematic skill for Thai people and Thai students. Also, errors occurred even in a simple sentence.

Nevertheless, many universities in Thailand realize the importance of writing skill. Writing courses are considered as required courses for students majoring in English such as Basic Writing Skills, Paragraph Writing, and Essay Writing. Although the curriculum includes many writing courses, the students still have problems in writing.

From the previous studies and the score review of ETS and IELTS, the researcher launched a pilot study to second-year Non-English major students to find out what types of errors occurred in their writing. The results showed that these students had difficulties in their writing; they committed errors in many levels such as lexical, sentence, and discourse level. This inspired the researcher to examine the errors in students' paragraph majoring in English to see the major problems and try to solve them. This study is intended to examine the types of errors in English paragraphs of second-year English major students at Naresuan University in terms of lexical, sentence, and discourse level. In this study, errors in all three levels (lexical, sentence, and discourse) will be analyzed together to see which level has the highest percentage of error by using Carl James levels of error model. It is a challenging opportunity for the researcher to carry out this study because most studies both in the Thai and EFL/ESL context focused on one or two levels but few studies focused on lexical, sentence, and discourse level together. Therefore, this study will fulfill the gap in the lack of the quantitative information for the identification of errors in these three levels as well as to identify the plausible explanation for the errors.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine types of errors in paragraph writing of second-year English major students at



Naresuan University.

2. To find out which levels of error are mostly found in students' paragraph writing by using Carl James levels of error model.

3. To identify the plausible explanation for the errors.

Research Questions

1. What types of errors are produced in English paragraph writing by second-year English major students at Naresuan University?

2. Which levels of errors are mostly found in students' paragraph writing?

3. What are the causes of errors in students' paragraph writing?

Scope of the study

The present study focuses on 29 second-year English major students who enrolled in Paragraph Writing (205222) in 2014 academic year. They passed the Fundamental English, Developmental English and Basic Writing courses. Therefore, they are supposed to further their writing skill in longer or more difficult writing task such as paragraph writing. Their first assignment of writing task will be examined to identify the errors in terms of lexical, sentence, and discourse level. The results may not be generalized to all Thai EFL undergraduate students due to the small sample, but to those in similar circumstances; that is, Thai EFL undergraduate students who are studying in an English major curriculum and learning paragraph writing.

Research Methodology

This study presents descriptive data which identified and analyzed errors in L2 learners' writings.

The present study is intended at examining types of errors as well as to find out which levels of error are mostly found in students' paragraph writing, and to identify the plausible explanation for the errors. It is quantitative in terms of the procedure for data collection and data analysis. The analysis of the study is basically interpreting data obtained from 29 student's narrative paragraph. Carl James [9] levels of error model was adopted for recording errors made by students in their writings, whereby the data were analyzed and quantified in terms of numbers and percentages. From the data obtained errors are analyzed to examine the type of errors committed by the students in the respective writings. The findings are then discussed and explained in terms of causes influencing the occurrence of errors in students' writings.

Population

The populations of the study were 29 second-year English major students who enrolled in Paragraph Writing (205222) which was the first semester course of their second-year undergraduate program in the Faculty of Humanities at Naresuan University. Regarding their background knowledge, these students have competence in English above the ordinary level because they passed the Fundamental English (001211), the Developmental English (001212), and Basic Writing (205121) which provided a number of English writing tasks. Therefore, they have the ability to write a longer or more difficult writing task such as paragraphs. All of the students are Thai and learn English as a foreign language (EFL). The students will be asked to write paragraph by the lecturer in the same topic that is "My Memorable Trip/Journey". After that, the first



assignment will be collected by the researcher to examine errors.

Research instrument

The first assignment of students' writing task was used as the instrument in this study.

The participants were asked to write the narrative paragraph by the lecturer in the same topic namely "My Memorable Trip/Journey". The length of the paragraph is between 180-220 words or 1 page at within 2 hours during the class. The participants are not allowed to use the dictionary as well as discuss with their friends. Using the first assignment of student's writing task will be an appropriate method for this study because first assignment can reveal the real student's performance on their writing. It is vital to note that the error analysis used in this study will be focused on lexical, sentence, and discourse level in student's paragraph.

Data Collection

The data collection consists of:

Pilot Study

The pilot study was held from November to December 2013. This study was used to find out what types of error were occurred in students' paragraphs written in English. The non-English major students participated in this study. They were asked to write the paragraph in class from 2 topics which are "My Favorite Animal" and "Your Job You are Interested in". The results revealed that the student committed errors in three levels; lexical, sentence, and discourse level. From the results of the pilot study, therefore, the researcher decided to choose the Carl James (1998) levels of errors model as the

framework for the research to examine types of errors and to find out which levels of error are mostly found in students' paragraph writing.

In addition, to identify the plausible explanation for those errors as well.

Main Study

This study will be conducted in accordance with the following steps:

1. The present study will begin on the first semester of 2014 academic year (August to December 2014).
2. The researcher asks permission to collect research data from the lecturer of Paragraph Writing (205222) course.
3. The consent form will be sign by the participants of the study.
4. The participants will be asked to write the narrative paragraph which is the first assignment in the same topic namely "My Memorable Trip/Journey" by the lecturer.
5. While writing, the participants are not allowed to use dictionaries and discuss with their friends.
6. The paragraph must be organized in at least three paragraphs (Introduction, Body, and Conclusion). The length of the paragraph is 180-220 words or 1 page at within 2 hours during the class.
7. The participants will be informed by the lecturer that the paragraph will be graded in order to enhance their intention in writing.
8. After the participants finish the class, the paragraph will be collect by the researcher.
9. Carl James levels of error model is significantly used in the data analysis.



Data analysis

The data will be analyzed by Carl James levels of error model that mention in the Chapter 2. The steps are as follows:

1. All the paragraphs will be encoded with number instead of student names to maintain confidentiality of the participants.
2. Errors found in students' paragraphs will be analyzed at lexical, sentence, and discourse levels.
3. Each type of errors will be calculated in percentage.
4. The number of errors at lexical, sentence, and discourse level will be calculated by the following formula : Percentage of errors = number of errors (for each type of errors) X 100 / Total number of subjects
5. The percentage of errors at lexical, sentence, and discourse level will be tabulated.
6. The lexical, sentence, and discourse errors will be discussed for plausible explanations.

From the Carl James levels of error model, the levels of error are divided into three levels: lexical errors, sentence errors, and discourse errors.

Types of errors at the lexical level are classified as follows: misselection, misformations, distortions, confusion of sense relations, collocational errors, function word errors, overinclusion, misplacement, plural -s error, third-person singular -s error, past tense -d error, perfect tense error, adjectival error, wrong usage

Types of errors at the sentence level are classified as follows: punctuation, misselection of article, misselection and misordering of negator, superfluous word, omit word, coordination error, subordination error, tense, subject-verb agreement,

voice, fragment sentence, run-on sentence, etc.

Types of errors at the discourse level are classified as follows: cohesive device errors, digression, incoherence, inconsistency, lack of organization, no introduction, no transitional words, no topic sentence stating the main points, lack of development of ideas, no conclusion, etc.

Results

The results of the analysis show that the total number of errors is 725. They are 369 grammar errors, 173 text errors, 146 substance errors, and 37 discourse errors. It shows that grammar errors are the highest errors among others.

In grammar errors, errors identified can be categorized into morphology errors and syntax errors. Within the errors found, the most three predominant types of errors are nouns (96), clauses (72), and verbs (55).

In text errors, errors identified can be categorized into lexical errors and semantic error in lexis. Within the errors found, the most three predominant types of errors are collocational errors (60), confusion of sense relations (54), and distortions (50).

In substance errors, errors identified can be categorized into commas, capitals, exclamations, spilt, apostrophe (s), fusions, semicolon, and colon. Within the errors found, the most three predominant types of errors are commas (88), capitals (43), and exclamations (4).

In discourse errors, errors identified can be categorized into coherence appearing 37 times.

Based on the conclusion above, this results shows that the use of grammar, especially in morphology level and syntax level are considered



difficult grammatical structure for second-year English major students, even though they have passed several courses in the study of the second language, particularly Fundamental English, Developmental English and Basic Writing courses.

Discussion

The data of this study were taken from the students' narrative paragraph written by 29 second-year English major students at Naresuan University of first semester 2014 academic year. The results of the study revealed that the use of grammar, especially in morphology level and syntax level are considered difficult grammatical structure for second-year English major students, even though they have passed several courses in the study of the second language, particularly Fundamental English, Developmental English and Basic Writing courses. In other words, it seems that they still have a lot of problems with English grammatical structure, especially morphology and syntax as the important component of language.

The findings of the analysis show that the total number of grammar errors is 369. They are 96 nouns, 72 clauses, 55 verbs, 51 phrases, 48 sentences, 24 intersentences, 19 adjectives, and 4 adverbs. It shows that errors of noun are the highest among others. This findings supported studies carried out by Ponvarin (2007) who carried out a study to identify and classify the types of errors of graduate students' writings and to underpin the graduate students' writing weaknesses in A Survey of Writing Errors of First Year Graduate Students Studying Business English for International Communication at Srinakharinwirot University. The study focused on grammatical errors: verbs, nouns,

pronouns, adjectives and adverbs, sentence structure. The most common errors found were: Verb part: Present, Past, and Perfect Tenses. Noun part: Definite Article, Pronoun part: Relative Pronouns, Adjective and Adverb part: adjectives, Sentence Structure part: Additional Remarks on Conjunctions. In the same way, Thananart (2000) examined errors in comparison and contrast paragraphs written by EFL university students at Chulalongkorn University. This study focused on grammatical structure. The findings showed that the vast majority of errors were grammatical structure, and the other types of errors were errors in using transition signals, verb forms, word choice and spelling. Moreover, Sawsan Saud Aziz (2011) carried out An Analysis of Errors in Paragraph Writing in English by Second Year Geography & History Students at University of Baghdad. This study focused on grammar, mechanic, and lexis. The findings revealed that most students made different errors such as wrong spelling, misuse of singular/plural pronoun, misuse of tense, misuse of prepositions, and word order.

Regarding the results of the present study and related studies mentioned above, it can be seen that grammar was the serious problems in writing for EFL students.

The more serious problems were grammar errors that reflect writing ability. Moreover, it could be assumed that the types of errors made by participants in their writing were result from difficulties in language areas. Generally, the errors may cause by interference from L1 and inadequate competent of L2. Errors, hence, could be analyzed to provide practical feedback in aiding L2 learners acquire grammatical competence in L2.



Based on the discussion above, the results show that the use of morphology and syntax are considered difficult grammatical structure for L2 learners, although they have passed several stages in the study of the L2.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to examine types of errors as well as to find out which levels of error are mostly found in student's paragraph, and to identify the plausible explanation for the errors.

The data used in the analysis were taken from first assignment of students' writing task. The 29 narrative paragraphs with the same topic (My Memorable Trip/Journey) were selected. A Carl James (1998) level of error model was adopted. The purposes of the analysis were to answer the following questions.

1. What types of errors are produced in English paragraph writing by second-year English major students at Naresuan University?

The total numbers of errors found in students' paragraph writing were 369 (50.90%) grammar errors consist of morphology errors and syntax errors, 173 (23.86%) text errors consist of lexical errors and semantic error in lexis, 146 (20.14%) substance errors consist of comma, capitals, exclamation, spilt, fusion, apostrophe (s), semicolon, and colon, and 37 (5.10%) discourse errors consist of coherence.

2. Which levels of errors are mostly found in students' paragraph writing?

The level of errors which mostly found in

students' paragraph writing is grammar errors which separated into two types; morphological errors and syntax errors. The total number of grammar errors was 369 out of 725. The total numbers of morphological errors were 174 and syntax errors were 195. Within the errors found, the most three main types of errors were noun (96), clause (72), and verb (55).

3. What are the causes of errors in students' paragraph writing?

The present study indicates that interference from L1 and inadequate competent of L2 are the main causes of errors. For example of interference from L1, in this study, capital errors also constitute a significant problem in the students' writings. For instant,

(a) ...depend on place not time, It depends on the people...

(b) When the sun set, There is beautiful view.

This could be caused by L1 interference as there is no capitalization in Thai writing. Therefore, Thai students encounter new rules of capitalization in writing in English which cause another problem for the students.

Another causes of error in this study is inadequate competent of L2 or intralingual errors, these kinds of errors are caused by the target language itself (James, 1998). According to Richards (1974), the intralingual errors categorize the errors turn into: Over-generalization, Ignorance of rule restrictions, Incomplete applications rules, and False concept hypothesized. For example, A student has substituted the Past Tense of take "took" with "taked". There is an over form of a structure verb took becomes taked.



Suggestion

1. There should be a comparative study on the errors in writing of non-English majors.
2. Further studies should be carried out on specific areas that are difficulties for Thai students' writing skill such as grammar usage, cohesive device, collocation word, etc.
3. There should be a further study of errors analysis in another genre such as descriptive, expository, and persuasive paragraph.
4. Further studies should include interviews with students in order to find out why they make these particular errors in their writing.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my lecturer, Dr. Khampee Noonkhan who guided me in working on this study. Also, I would like to thank my family who encouraged me throughout the project for their moral and spiritual support.

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