

THE ANALYSIS OF INTERLINGUAL AND INTRALINGUAL ERRORS IN THE WRITINGS OF THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the occurrence of interlingual and intralingual errors in the written compositions of Thai university students. The study also identified the types of errors Thai students struggled with most. The study included 41 Suratthani Rajabhat University third-year English majors. The research instrument utilized in this study was a form of unstructured writing known as free writing. Every individual was required to fulfill the task entitled "My Dream." The analysis and categorization of students' writing was conducted through the utilization of James' error taxonomy. The identification of error sources was conducted using a diagnosis-based analysis. The findings revealed that within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), intralingual errors, particularly those related to grammar, presented the most significant difficulty across all proficiency levels. Of all 6,104 words written by all levels, a total of 1,521 errors were detected, with the majority (1,440 errors) falling under the classification of intralingual errors, while a considerably smaller proportion (81 errors) were identified as interlingual errors. Notably, students at the A2 level demonstrated the highest occurrence of grammar errors, constituting 18.99% of the total words written. The subsequent distribution consisted of B2 level students comprising 17.42%, C1 level students comprising 14.08%, A1 level students comprising 13.09%, and B1 level students comprising 12.05%. The results also showed that CEFR levels did not statistically affect English writing proficiency. This suggested that higher CEFR levels did not necessarily improve English writing.

Keywords: interlingual errors, intralingual errors, English writing, CEFR

Introduction

Among the four English skills, writing is the hardest. Students must have enough linguistic knowledge to write well and correctly. Thais consider English a foreign language, not a second. Most Thais cannot speak standard English. Thai governments have made significant efforts to improve Thai people's English proficiency, but many obstacles and challenges have

stood in the way of our expected success (Tipprachaban, 2022). The level of English language competency among Thais is among the lowest seen anywhere in the world (EF SET, 2023). Recent studies showed that Thai language learners of English as a second language made many writing errors. When I worked as a teacher at a university teaching English composition to English majors, I noticed that many of my students had difficulty avoiding grammatical errors in their written work. This was in addition to the fact that they had to master different types of essay genres, such as descriptive, narrative, argumentative, and others. Even the students in their third year who had already completed basic writing courses made a number of mistakes in their writing. In Thailand, students began studying English as a second language as early as primary school, and the primary focus of English instruction was on grammatical structure (Hengsadeekul, Hengsadeekul, Koul, & Kaewkuekool, 2010). Despite this, they had a lot of problems with grammar and spelling when they wrote. Writing is a skill that is essential for English graduates to have in the job market because the world is becoming increasingly interconnected as a result of globalization. When it comes to international communication, the language of choice is English. Publications such as books, articles, news, and papers are increasingly being written and distributed in English. According to Santos (2000), the necessity of writing can be broken down into three distinct categories. To begin, an increasing number of international linguists are opting to focus on writing as their area of expertise. Secondly, an increasing number of academic articles and journals are being published in English. Thirdly, an increasing number of international students are opting to earn their degrees in countries where English is the primary language. Countries that do not speak English but have the intention of publishing their cultures and identities in order to become a "soft power" in the global competition are required to use English in order to accomplish this goal. Writing in English is therefore essential for both broadening one's perspective and opening up one's own nation to the rest of the world. Writing is a skill that graduates of English departments who want to work in sections need to have. They will be expected to compose a variety of written works in English, including articles, news, books, journals, emails, and business letters. As has been seen, one of the most important skills to acquire when learning English is the ability to write. Despite the fact that many Thai students began studying English as early as kindergarten or primary school, the students' written English typically displayed grammatical and spelling errors (Hemchua and Schmitt, 2006; Suetae and Yok, 2012; Khumphee and Yodkamlue, 2017).

Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate the errors that are made by Thai university students and to categorize them into interlingual and intralingual errors. This research is funded by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Surattthani Rajabhat University. The Ethical Review Board approved human subject research. The findings of this study could be used to modify the writing curriculum to improve learning efficiency and address knowledge gaps that cause second-language writing errors. The research findings could also be applied to Thai students in other university with similar CEFR proficiency levels. Writing

proficiency is essential for university students, especially those in English-based fields like tourism, hospitality, and education. Thus, it is crucial to examine the students' writing challenges because they directly affect the future of Thailand's human resources.

Research objectives

1. To determine the most problematic errors made by Thai University students;
2. To determine interlingual and intralingual errors in the English writing of Thai university students;
3. To determine the most problematic errors in L2 writing by Thai university students at each CEFR level;
4. To determine if CEFR levels influence students' writing skills.

Literature review

1. Significance of Learners' Errors Analysis

An evaluation of writing errors in English is viewed as one method for improving learners' written skills as a measure of language learning success, and teachers have the opportunity to develop effective teaching strategies for enhancing students' writing abilities (Waelateh, Boonsuk, Ambele & Jeharsae, 2019). This is in accordance with Corder (1975, 1981) and Phoocharoensil et al. (2016), who assert that analyzing learners' errors is an opportunity to develop suitable remedial instruction and materials.

Ellis (2003: 47) defines error analysis, also known as error analysis (EA), as the study of errors. Contrastive Analysis (CA), which was replaced by Error Analysis (EA), was a method that attempted to predict errors made by learners by identifying linguistic differences between their L1 and the target language. EA was developed to help language teachers and students. Error Analysis (EA) is a collection of techniques for locating, describing, and clarifying the causes of students' mistakes (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). According to Corder (1967), learner errors are significant for the following three reasons: (1) they serve a pedagogical purpose by showing teachers what learners have learned and what they have not yet mastered; (2) they serve a research purpose by providing evidence about how languages are learned; and (3) they serve a learning purpose by acting as devices through which learners can discover the rules of the target language. Students should not only learn how to write, but they should also learn how to know their weak points so that they can improve their writing abilities. Error analysis is necessary as a result of the significant contribution it makes to the teaching of writing skills. According to Ellis (2003), learners make mistakes because they have knowledge gaps; learners make mistakes when they are unsure of what constitutes correct information. Despite the fact that mistakes are made due to learners' occasional lapses in performance, the most common cause of mistakes is when learners fail to demonstrate what they already know.

Studying a second language requires the development of four language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are all language-related subskills. Writing facilitates communication between the author and the reader (Kamlasi & Nokas, 2017: 131-132). Padgate (2008) found that the majority of students viewed writing as more challenging than other language skills. As previously stated, numerous researchers believe that writing is the most difficult skill to acquire when learning a language (Richard and Renandya, 2002; Broughton et al., 2003; Taylor, 2009; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013; Rattanadilok Na Phuket & Othman, 2015). Writing is the most difficult skill to master, in my opinion, because learners must first master grammar and vocabulary before they can compose an effective piece of writing. Harmer (2004: 31-34) defines teaching writing as an activity in which students write to improve their knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the language.

To classify the sources of writing errors in the present study, the researcher adopts the diagnosis-based category that classifies errors as interlingual and intralingual.

2. *Interlingual errors and intralingual errors*

An error that occurs as a result of improper or incomplete acquisition of the target language is referred to as an intralingual error by Richards and Schmidt (2010: 294). This type of error is distinguished from errors that occur as a result of language transfer. Interlingual errors are said to occur when the learner's habits (patterns, systems, or rules) obstruct or prevent the learner from acquiring the patterns and rules of the second language to some extent, as stated by Corder (1981). According to Chelli (2014), interlingual errors are the result of language transfer, which is influenced by the learner's first language. An example of an interlingual error is when a learner makes mistakes in their target language due to the native influence of their first language. As a direct consequence of this, the vast majority of students adhered to the identical set of rules in both of their languages. These are some examples of errors that occur when translating between languages.

For instance,

'The book of Bow' rather than 'Bow's book.'

'Ammy extremely mean' rather than 'Ammy is extremely mean.'

One aspect of the target language can affect another, causing intralingual errors. A student might have created "James is comes" by combining "James is coming" and "James comes." The learner's first language causes interference, language transfer, and cross-linguistic interference in writing between languages (Sari, 2016). For instance, "Elle regarde les" (she sees them) was created using English word order instead of "Elle les regarde (she them sees)." English word order created the incorrect French sentence. When learning a second language, the second factor to take into consideration is the possibility of making errors within the new language. Students are prone to making mistakes in the target language due to the fact that they are not fluent in it and therefore find it difficult to use (Angguni, 2020). Intralingual

interference occurs when learners generalize from partial exposure to the target language rather than copying the mother tongue, according to Richard (1974).

Richard (1974) divides intralingual errors into four categories: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of the rules, and false concept hypothesis or semantic errors.

1) An example of overgeneralization is when a learner builds a deviant structure based on his prior knowledge of other structures in the target language. This is an example of what is known as "overgeneralization." Learners, for instance, pluralize even irregular plurals by adding an 's' to the end of the word, e.g. *childrens* as well as generalizing the '-ed' past form, e.g. *broked*.

2) Ignorance of rule restrictions, according to James (1998), ignorance is specific in the sense that one is normally said to be ignorant of structure; the person learning a second language does not obey the structure of the language being learned as the target. This kind of mistake happens when the learner acts in a way that is contrary to the limitations imposed by the existing structures. Certain rule restriction errors can be understood in terms of analogy, and they may develop as a result of learning the roles that rules play in a system.

3) Incomplete application of the rules: This type of error takes place when the learner does not fully apply the rules as a direct result of the stimulus sentence.

4) The false concept hypothesis asserts that false conceptualization arises when students incorrectly understand the distinctions between the items of the target language. The hypothesized concept is shown to be invalid as a consequence of the learners' inadequate grasp of the distinctions between the items that constitute the target language.

3. *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in Thailand*

The CEFR is a global standard for assessing and describing language proficiency. A six-point scale rates language proficiency from A1 (beginner) to C2 (master). This feature helps language teachers and testers assess various language qualifications. This means that employers and educational institutions can easily compare our credentials to those of other national exams (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

In the year 2016, the Thai Ministry of Education (MOE) made an official announcement regarding the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), as established by the Council of Europe in 2001. Since then, all 38 Rajabhat universities in the country were educational institutions that bore direct responsibility for the provision of teacher education. One of the primary responsibilities of this institution was to educate prospective teachers who would eventually become practicing teachers in the field of English education. Therefore, the implementation of the CEFR policy in 2016 had a significant impact on various aspects of educational management policy, curriculum design, and classroom practice at the university level (Charttrakul & Damnet, 2021).

CEFR dominated student and teacher English assessments, and CEFR testing was a major part of English assessments for university students, including Suratthani Rajabhat University. It was a requirement to pass each year and earn an English degree here; thus, students received many CEFR training courses from the university, and English students had annual training courses. Students had regular CEFR assessments because they needed them to graduate. CEFR testing was used to assess students' English proficiency at Suratthani Rajabhat University and other universities in Thailand. Thai researchers also used the CEFR to evaluate students' English proficiency. Waluyo (2019) used CEFR assessments to assess first-year Walailak University students' English proficiency. The study included 2,248 people, 74% of whom were female and 26% male. The study found that 77.2% of participants were A1 or A2 proficient according to the CEFR. These levels were typical of primary and junior high school students' language skills. The findings should explain Thai university students' low proficiency. This southern Thai university attracted many students from nearby provinces. This study may not represent the entire student population in the country, but it could revealed the English language proficiency of students near the university.

Apridayani (2022) examined Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) in Thai EFL students. A sample of 152 non-English major second-year undergraduates was studied. This sample had 19.7% men and 78.3% women. A survey instrument focused on Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) strategies for English language acquisition. The author requested an English proficiency assessment that assessed listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills according to the Common European Framework of Reference. Participants were instructed to complete surveys after this assessment. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation. Students at proficiency levels A1, A2, B1, and B2 used Goal Setting and Planning most often. However, the B1 group used Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) strategies differently from the A1, A2, and B2 groups. This study examined how Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) strategies could be adapted to different English proficiency levels to improve teaching.

According to these studies, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) clearly helped with English language acquisition, as teachers could discover instructional materials that improved students' domain learning by accurately assessing their proficiency levels.

Research Methodology

1. Participants

The study's participants were selected using the purposive sampling technique (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Participants were forty-one third-year English majors from Suratthani Rajabhat University. Their total age was 21 years old. Since elementary school, they had been studying English as a foreign language, but their only exposure to English-speaking environments was in the classroom. According to the CEFR, 14 were at the A1 level, 9 were at

the A2 level, 4 were at the B1 level, 9 were at the B2 level and 5 were at the C1 level. As both subjects were required, all students have completed *Principles of Paragraph Writing* (basic writing) in their first year and *Essay Writing* (advanced writing) in their second. According to the curriculum, *Principles of Paragraph Writing* focused on the fundamental principles, processes, and techniques of writing in an effort to improve students' English grammar for writing everyday sentences and short passages. *Essay Writing* required students to examine the paragraph and essay components and structures. Students were taught how to construct well-organized paragraphs and essay outlines. In addition, students were expected to compose an introduction, body, and conclusion. In addition, they developed the ability to organize ideas or information and present them in an effective paragraph or essay.

2. Procedures

English majors in their third year had to write "My dream." The researcher chose only third-year university students to control for variables such as writing experience. Each student completed the same writing modules required for an English undergraduate degree. The researcher informed the subjects of the study's goals and obtained written consent to use their data. Steps for data collection: an unrestricted essay on "My Dream" was assigned first. They were not allowed to use dictionaries, and their English proficiency was considered. We chose this topic to inspire writing. A one-hour writing session was supervised. Participants were told not to use any assisting tools and that their score for this task would not affect their module score for their study. After participants finished writing, the researcher collected their papers and entered all the data into the computer, noting any errors. This study analyzed and categorized errors using James' error taxonomy. A corpus of 6,104 words was studied. A1 writings totaled 1,513, A2 1,444, B1 590, B2 1,554 and C1 1,003 words.

3. The assessment of student's writing

The previously proposed taxonomy was employed to classify the errors found in student writing. The error count adhered to Hemchua and Schmitt's (2006) criteria with the following modification:

1. Each lexical item was counted as a distinct unit.
2. Multiple grammatical errors within the same phrase, clause, or sentence were tallied separately.
3. Repetitive occurrences of the same error were counted separately; for example, if a student made the error twice, it was counted twice. (They were categorized as a single entity by Hemchua and Schmitt).

After the errors were identified they then were grouped into interlingual errors and intralingual errors to answer the research questions.

4. The instrument

The study focused on an instrument, which served as the designated topic for the essay. The subject matter under discussion pertained to the concept of 'My dream'. The

selection of this topic was based on its broad nature and the consideration that it would be manageable for students at these proficiency levels to complete within a one-hour timeframe. The majority of participants consisted of students at the A1-A2 level, indicating that the chosen topic was within their realm of familiarity. The topic underwent verification and validation by three experts in the fields of second language instruction and applied linguistics. The assessment was conducted utilizing the IOC index (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977) in order to determine the content validity of the material and all items demonstrated a validity coefficient exceeding 0.5, indicating their validity.

Results

This study showed that grammar errors exhibited the highest frequency among the written works of Thai university students (see Table 1 below). The study examined the CEFR levels of the participants, which ranged from A1 to C1. Among the students at different levels, A2 level students exhibited the highest frequency of grammar errors, accounting for 18.99% of all the words produced by students at their respective levels. This was followed by B2 level students at 17.42%, C1 level students at 14.08%, A1 level students at 13.09%, and B1 level students at 12.05%.

Table 1 The error occurrence by James' error taxonomy and the diagnosis-based analysis in summary

Types of errors/ CEFR Level	A1		A2		B1		B2		C1	
	Error tokens	% (out of 1,513 words written)	Error tokens	% (out of 1,444 words written)	Error tokens	% (out of 590 words written)	Error tokens	% (out of 1,554 words written)	Error tokens	% (out of 1,003 words written)
Intralingual errors										
Substance errors	88	5.82	101	6.99	27	4.58	61	3.93	28	2.79
Lexical errors	53	3.50	47	3.27	8	1.36	57	3.67	15	1.60
Grammar errors	198	13.09	274	18.99	71	12.05	271	17.42	141	14.08
Total	339	22.41	422	29.25	106	17.99	389	25.02	184	18.47
Interlingual errors										
Lexical errors	18	1.19	29	2.01	5	0.85	22	1.42	7	0.70
Total	18	1.19	29	2.01	5	0.85	22	1.42	7	0.70
Subtotal	357	23.60	451	31.26	111	18.84	411	26.44	191	19.17

This study also determined the causes of errors in Thai university students' writing. The study found intralingual and interlingual errors. Intralingual errors resulted from poor target language proficiency (Richards and Schmidt, 2010: 294). However, interlingual errors occurred

when the learner's linguistic habits, patterns, systems, or rules hinder the acquisition of the second language's patterns and rules (Corder, 1981). Intralingual errors dominated Thai university students' written compositions, according to the analysis. The analysis found that of all 6,104 words written by all levels, a total of 1,521 errors were detected, with the majority (1,440 errors) falling under the classification of intralingual errors, while a considerably smaller proportion (81 errors) were identified as interlingual errors. Intralingual errors accounted for most errors in students at all CEFR proficiency levels.

Furthermore, the study examined university students' written compositions by CEFR level for errors. The main goals were to identify the most common errors at each CEFR level and to determine if CEFR levels affected students' writing proficiency. All CEFR levels showed that intralingual errors, particularly grammar errors, were the biggest challenge. The most grammar errors were made by A2 students, accounting for 18.99% of their written work.

Discussion

This section analyzed the research findings in light of established theories and prior research.

Based on the findings, this study served as additional empirical evidence supporting the notion that grammar errors posed a significant hindrance to the production of high-quality written work among Thai university students. It was observed that students at all academic levels consistently exhibited a propensity for committing grammar errors, which were found to be the most prevalent type of error, and grammar errors were categorized into the intralingual error category according to the diagnosis-based analysis. The findings presented in this study were in opposition to the conclusions drawn by Khumphee and Yodkamlue (2017), Watcharapunyawong and Usaha (2013), Suvarnamani (2017), Bjorkegren (2018), Ayar (2020), and Nadya & Muthalib (2021), who reported that interlingual errors were identified as the primary factor contributing to writing difficulties among Thai university students.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study were in line with earlier studies by Suetae and Yok (2012), Sari (2016), Pratiwi (2015), Ghezzou and Mammeri (2016), Sijono & Aristo (2019), Angguni (2020), and Myint (2020), which showed that intralingual errors posed a significant barrier to the production of high-quality written work among Thai university students.

The analysis revealed that the primary sources of errors in the writing of university students were intralingual and interlingual errors. The researcher observed that the categorization of errors varied depending on each individual researcher's perspectives and taxonomies they used to categorize the errors.

Conclusion

The study revealed that intralingual errors, specifically those related to grammar, were the most challenging aspect across all levels of proficiency. Out of the 6,104 words written by all levels, a total of 1,521 errors were found. The majority of these errors (1,440) were classified as intralingual errors, while a smaller proportion (81 errors) were identified as interlingual errors. Significantly, students at the A2 proficiency level exhibited the highest frequency of grammatical errors, accounting for 18.99% of the overall written words in their level. The subsequent distribution included 17.42% of students at the B2 level, 14.08% of students at the C1 level, 13.09% of students at the A1 level, and 12.05% of students at the B1 level. The study also found no correlation between CEFR levels and student writing proficiency. This implied that achieving higher CEFR levels does not necessarily lead to improvement in English writing skills.

Suggestion

The study found that grammar errors hindered Thai university students' second-language writing. Intralingual errors were most common in their writing. The study also found no correlation between CEFR levels and students' writing skills. Thai university students' writing proficiency was affected by their English learning methods and instructional approach. Most errors were intralingual, resulting from poor English language acquisition. Comparisons with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) showed that students of any proficiency level can improve their second language writing skills. The researcher encourages further research and offers these suggestions:

1. A study should be conducted to compare students' writing abilities in English by employing various language teaching methods, with the aim of identifying an improved approach to teaching English grammar to students.
2. There are multiple approaches that can be employed in the instruction of English grammar, including the C-R approach, which is a widely utilized method for enhancing students' grammatical proficiency.
3. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, it is recommended to broaden the participant pool to include students at various universities in Thailand who are at similar proficiency levels in English.

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