

An Error Analysis of Written English Paragraphs at Lexical, Syntactic, and Paragraph Levels Made by Thai EFL Non-English Major Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the most frequent errors made by Thai EFL non-English major students at lexical, syntactic, and paragraph levels in their EFL writing class. 95 pieces of expository paragraphs written by non-English major students who enrolled in a paragraph writing course (205122) at Naresuan University were collected and analysed. It was found that the most frequently committed errors at the word, sentence, and paragraph levels were spelling, capitalisation, and errors in semantics and good coherence, respectively. It is suggested that writing teachers utilise these errors as a facilitator in teaching and improving the writing performance of their students. In addition, L1 interference, the literal translation from Thai, and differences between Thai and English should be taken into account. Moreover, the knowledge of some particular mechanics and grammar need to be taught in greater detail. The findings emerging from the present study imply that more writing activities and exercises on revision and feedback provision are needed.

Keywords: Error analysis; lexical level; syntactic level; paragraph level; Thai EFL non-English major students

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

English writing plays an important role in second language (L2) academic settings all over the world. Hyland (2003, p. xiii) states that “learning how to write in a second language is one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning”. Additionally, writing skill requires basic skills for L2 learners to understand (Al-Shujairi & Tan, 2017; Kirmizi & Karci, 2017; Padgate, 2008; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). Byrne (1984) noted that writing is the process of transforming a writer’s thoughts into language that requires many important elements, for example, vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric. Therefore, making errors is unavoidable while learning writing in English, and various error types can be commonly made by L2 writing learners in all writing levels (e.g., word level, sentence level, and paragraph level).

Error analysis (EA) is the approach that is used for studying second language acquisition (SLA) by putting an emphasis on internal processes of learners’ creative ability to create the target language (Saville-Troike, 2006). It is a type of linguistic analysis focusing on the errors that L2 learners make. In other words, it is part of psycholinguistics and can be viewed as a methodology which aims to investigate L2 learners’ language (Corder, 1981). In addition, it is “a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learners’ errors” (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p.51). Alhaysony (2012) indicates that, in SLA, error analysis is a very important process. It plays an important role in L2 writing since it allows teachers who teach writing and researchers to

discover and correct errors made by learners so that they can avoid making errors when they write in L2.

Therefore, there has been a number of research studies employing different approaches to analyse learners' errors, describe causes of making errors, and categorise the kinds of errors made in L2 writing. Recently, there are many studies investigating errors/types of errors in various levels of writing (e.g., word, sentence, and paragraph levels) and types of writing (e.g., paragraph writing and essay writing) (e.g., Boonyarattanasoontorn, 2017; Hamed, 2018; Hussain (2019); Murad & Khalil, 2015; Nuruzzaman, Islam & Shuchi, 2018; Phuket & Othman, 2015; Sermsook, Liamnimitr, & Pochakorn, 2017; Sychandone, 2016).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nowadays, it is crucial for L2 learners to have good writing skills, especially in academic settings since they are required to write in English in various types of writing. L2 writing learners are likely to make many kinds of errors when they write in English since English writing is formal and requires a set of instructional practices to formulate new ideas and transform information (James, 1998). Thus, in order to improve writing skills, error analysis can help to know about learners' language ability, what they have learned, and what they lack (James, 1998; Saville-Troike, 2006). Also, this helps writing teachers know the difficulties learners face so that they can find ways to improve their teaching (Dulay et al., 1982).

In Thailand, Thai EFL learners have been provided with a number of English writing courses, but problems and difficulties in writing are still encountered by these L2 learners (Boonyarattanasoontorn, 2017; Padgate, 2008; Phuket & Othman, 2015; Sermsook et al., 2017). Apart from English major students, non-English major students are a large group of L2 learners who enroll in English writing courses since they need to prepare themselves for their future career, and they are expected to have a good command of English writing when they are in the real working world.

It is important to note that a paragraph is one of the fundamental units of any pieces of written discourse (Chuenchaichon, 2011) and one of the most important conventions in presenting text to readers (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). However, to my knowledge, there have not been any research studies examining all writing levels (i.e., word level, sentence level, and paragraph level) altogether with Thai EFL non-English major students. Therefore, the researcher would like to analyse errors in the word, sentence, and paragraph levels, focusing on paragraphs written by Thai EFL non-English major students. These three writing levels were chosen since they could reflect the whole picture of paragraph writing. The findings of this study may result in more appropriate and effective lesson plans and teaching methods for a paragraph writing course. Importantly, it is hoped that the findings of this study will help writing teachers to design their teaching contents and activities in order to improve their students' writing to become better L2 writers.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The researcher aimed to achieve the following goals:

1. To examine the most frequent errors made by Thai EFL non-English major students at the lexical level in their EFL writing class
2. To examine the most frequent errors made by Thai EFL non-English major students at the syntactic level in their EFL writing class
3. To examine the most frequent errors made by Thai EFL non-English major students at the paragraph level in their EFL writing class

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the most frequent errors made by Thai EFL non-English major students at the lexical level in their EFL writing class?
2. What are the most frequent errors made by Thai EFL non-English major students at the syntactic level in their EFL writing class?
3. What are the most frequent errors made by Thai EFL non-English major students at the paragraph level in their EFL writing class?

LITERATURE REVIEW

DEFINITIONS OF ERRORS

Errors commonly occur when L2 learners produce the target language, both speaking and writing, and they can be defined in various aspects. Corder (1973) defined errors as the language features that L2 learners produce, but they are different from those used by native speakers. Similarly, Richards and Schmidt (2002) defined it as the incorrect use of a linguistic item, such as grammar and a speech act made by an L2 learner in which a native speaker of the target language does not use and views it as incomplete learning. Dulay et al. (1982, p.138) defined it as “the flawed side of the learner speech or writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from selected norm of mature language performance”. Brown (2007, p.257) defined an error and differentiated it from a mistake in that “an error...reflects the competence of the learner while mistakes can be self-corrected, an error cannot be self-corrected.

CLASSIFICATION OF ERRORS

In English writing, errors committed by L2 learners can be categorised into various categories. Corder (1981) classified errors into two categories which are, firstly, errors of competence (i.e., errors caused by linguistic differences between first language (L1) and the second language (L2) and differences between L1 learning and L2 learning) and, secondly, errors of performance (i.e., errors caused by learners' stress and fatigue). Dulay et al. (1982) proposed four categories of errors, namely linguistic category taxonomy (e.g. errors on grammatical rules, vocabulary usage, morphology, and syntax), surface strategy taxonomy (i.e., errors on omission, addition, misformation, and misordering), comparative taxonomy (i.e., developmental errors and interlingual errors), and communicative effect taxonomy (i.e., global errors, local errors, and

psychological predicates). James (1998) classified errors into five categories which are grammatical errors, substance errors, lexical errors, syntactic errors, and semantic errors.

ERROR ANALYSIS (EA)

Error analysis (EA) is of great interest to a number of linguists, scholars, and researchers in the field of SLA and L2 writing. Saville-Troike (2012, p.40) mentioned that error analysis is “the first approach to the study of SLA which includes an internal focus on learners’ creative ability to construct language”. It is an analysis that puts emphasis on errors made by learners. According to Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p.51), EA is “a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learners’ errors”. Also, Ulla (2014, p.40) noted that it is “the process to observe, analyse, and classify the deviations of the rules of the second language and then to reveal the systems operated by learner”. In investigating errors made by L2 learners, researchers will find out the types of errors, and these errors can indicate learners’ mind and language ability (Saville-Troike, 2006). Moreover, Gass and Selinker (2008) point out that EA is used to give evidence of the L2 learners’ knowledge. Additionally, it is used as a tool to compare between learner English and English itself (James, 1998). Thus, the research findings will be beneficial to writing researchers and teachers to know learners’ problems and difficulties they encounter. Then, they can use these findings to improve their teaching and writing performance of L2 writing learners.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

As mentioned earlier, EA has been proven to be beneficial to English writing learning and teaching. Therefore, there are a number of previous studies on EA conducted in various academic settings and in many countries.

There are many studies investigating the surface strategy taxonomy (i.e., errors on omission, addition, misformation, and misordering). For example, Kongkaew and Cedar (2018) examined errors in online English writing made by Thai EFL authors on the Tourism Authority of Thailand Website. 230 pieces of information containing 2,559 sentences were analysed by drawing mainly on the surface structure taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982). It was revealed that nearly half of the analysed sentences contained errors, and omission errors were committed the most, followed by misformation, addition, and misordering, respectively.

In addition, Karim et al. (2018) analysed errors in EFL classroom in Bangladesh. The study employed an analysis of errors proposed by Ellis (2002). The results revealed that grammatical errors were the most common errors, followed by overgeneralisation, misordering, and misinformation, respectively. Regarding grammatical errors, verb errors and tense errors were made by these learners the most.

Suraprajit (2021) conducted a study on analysing the errors in English essays written by 60 Thai non-English major students in Thailand. The surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) was adopted to analyze omission, addition, misformation, and misordering errors. It was revealed that the omission of articles was most common, followed by the addition of prepositions, the omission of preposition, the omission of subjects, and misformation of subject pronouns, respectively. The results of the study triggered EFL learners to be aware of writing errors that might occur.

Apart from investigating the surface strategy taxonomy, there are four recent studies that focus mainly on investigating linguistic category taxonomy in students’ composition. First of all,

a recent study by Hussain (2019) investigated the common errors in written English essays made by 130 undergraduate Saudi EFL female students, the frequency of different types of errors under four categories (i.e., grammar, lexis, semantics, and mechanics), and possible reasons behind those errors. The findings showed that the mechanics' category, including punctuation, capitalisation, and spelling errors were the most common errors committed by these L2 learners. It was also found that the teachers who used negative criticism affected the student's desire to learn to write negatively, and there was no encouragement to write outside the classroom. These were two main possible reasons that may contribute to students' writing errors.

Similarly, Nuruzzaman et al. (2018) conducted a study examining the writing errors committed by three different groups of 90 Saudi non-English major undergraduate students with different proficiency levels in English paragraph writing. The emphasis was put on analyzing four error categories which were grammatical, lexical, semantic, and mechanics errors. The findings revealed that grammatical errors were the most frequently committed errors; verb tense and subject-verb agreement were two types of errors made by these learners the most. In addition, the frequency of error types was made differently among different groups of students.

Moreover, Sermsook et al. (2017) investigated errors in written English sentences with 26 English major students in a Thai university and the error sources. The errors at the sentence level (e.g. tense, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and fragments) and the word level (e.g., nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and word choices) were the main focus. It was found that the errors on punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, capitalisation, and fragments were found the most. Moreover, a negative transfer of their first language was the main source of errors.

Lastly, Sychandone (2016) conducted comparative error analysis on students' written sentences of first, second, and third year students of the English Department at Champasack University focusing on the error types, the frequency of error types, the similarities and differences of errors, and error sources. Lexical errors (e.g., spelling and word choice) and syntactical errors (e.g., verb to be, verb, prepositions, and sentence construction) were the main focus. The second year students committed the most errors, followed by the first year and third year students, respectively. Syntactical errors were made the most by all three groups of students, and verb tenses were the most committed error. For the error sources, lacking knowledge of English grammatical rules, the overgeneralisation of specific rules and features of the target language, and L1 transfer were the main error sources.

Apart from investigating the surface strategy taxonomy and linguistic category taxonomy, variously, by analysing errors in written presentation, Murad and Khalil (2015) examined the errors in English writing made by 22 Arab students by focusing on errors on content and organisation (i.e., errors in the topic, semantics, and text organisation), vocabulary (i.e., errors in the use of varied lexemes, errors in word choice, and avoidance of certain words), language use (e.g., errors of agreement, verb tense, word order, and prepositions), and mechanism (i.e., errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation). The findings showed that language use was the most frequent errors made by these learners, followed by vocabulary, mechanism, and content and organisation, respectively. Negative transfer of interference and overgeneralisation was the main possible cause of these errors.

RESEARCH METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study were 95 non-English major students who enrolled in a paragraph writing course (205122) in the second semester of academic year 2020 at Naresuan University. All participants were Thai EFL writing learners who chose to study English as their minor subject, and they were chosen by purposive sampling. Their English proficiency was between lower intermediate and intermediate.

DATA COLLECTION

Regarding ethical issues, this research was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), (IRB No. P2-0001/2564). At every stage, the participants' names would remain confidential, and the results of this study were used for academic purposes only.

In this study, all participants were asked to do a writing test which was handwritten, not typed. They were instructed to write an expository paragraph of 150-170 words, within one hour at one sitting and under test conditions. The participants were allowed to use dictionaries and were given paper for note taking. The participants chose one writing topic from the expository paragraphs below.

1. Ways of Protecting the Environment around the Campus
2. Advantages of Studying English
3. Disadvantages of Using Social Media

These three different topics were used because all participants were familiar with them, and they had a chance to write about what they were most interested in. This let them reveal their writing ability and also their writing errors. The written scripts were then collected for further analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

After the data were collected, each paragraph was examined word by word, sentence by sentence, and paragraph by paragraph in order to find out the types and number of errors. For the analysis at the word and sentence levels, examining the types of errors was adapted and drew mainly on Hussain (2019), Nuruzzaman et al. (2018), Sermsook et al. (2017), and Sychandone (2016). These measures were chosen since they could analyse lexical, grammatical, and syntactical features in greater detail, and they suited the purposes of this present study. For the analysis at the paragraph level, examining the types of errors was adapted and drew mainly on Murad and Khalil (2015), focusing on examining errors in the topic, semantics, and text organisation, and Boardman (2008), looking mainly at the quality of the content and text organisation. It should be noted that the textbook "Writing to Communicate 1: Paragraphs" by Boardman (2008) was used as the main textbook of the paragraph writing course of this present study. Thus, the evaluation of the content and organisation of a good paragraph provided in this textbook was mainly used. That is, in analysing the content, the paragraph needs to be interesting to read and have good ideas and excellent support. Additionally, it needs to be unified and have no irrelevant sentences. In analysing the organisation, the paragraph needs to have a topic sentence with topic and controlling

idea. Also, it contains major and minor supporting sentences and a concluding sentence. Overall, it needs to have good coherence and good use of cohesive devices (Boardman, 2008, p.131).

Errors were then counted and put under different determined categories of this study by using coding. After that, they were converted into percentages in order to examine the frequency. In the following section, the results of the data analysis are presented. Tables 1, 2, and 3 list the types of errors, frequency of errors, percentage of errors found, rank, and examples of errors made in the participants' paragraph writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of this research are presented according to the three research questions (RQs) of this study.

RQ 1. WHAT ARE THE MOST FREQUENT ERRORS MADE BY THAI EFL NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT THE LEXICAL LEVEL IN THEIR EFL WRITING CLASS?

TABLE 1. Types of errors and frequency at the word level

Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank	Example
Word form (Parts of speech)	109	9.14	5	You can <i>communication</i> with other people.
Word choice	211	17.70	3	English has <i>much</i> benefits.
Spelling	267	22.40	1	Some people want to go <i>abord</i> .
Prepositions	240	20.13	2	Social media will make you <i>to</i> addicted <i>in</i> the applications.
Articles	193	16.19	4	Social media has <i>a</i> advantages and disadvantages.
Pronoun	77	6.46	6	We can travel by <i>yourself</i> .
Adverb	14	1.17	9	You can buy everything <i>easy</i> .
Transition words	46	3.86	7	<i>Example</i> , a company in Thailand want to trade with a company in China.
Adjectives	27	2.27	8	Using social media will make your concentration <i>bad</i> than before.
Nouns	8	0.67	10	They want to hire (<i>noun</i>) who can speak English. (<i>missing noun</i>)
Total	1,192	100		

After analysing the data, the number of errors at the word level was counted. As shown in Table 1, the results of this study indicate that, at the word level, spelling was the most common type of errors (267 errors, or 22.40%). It was followed by errors of prepositions (20.13%), word choice (17.70%), and articles (16.19%), respectively. The finding was in line with those found in a study conducted by Hussain (2019) who investigated Saudi female English major students' errors in English essays and found that spelling was the most frequently committed error by all learners. A similar finding was also found in Nuruzzaman et al. (2018) who examined errors committed by Saudi non-English major students in English paragraph writing in which the results showed that spelling was the most frequently committed error. The reasons for the occurrence of this error type might be because EFL writing learners might be familiar with writing by typing on their computers rather than writing by hand. By doing so, their spelling was checked and corrected by computers. Once they had to write in English by hand, errors in spelling were highly possible to occur. Also, carelessness might account for this type of error. Regarding errors in prepositions, which was

found in the second rank, this might also result from negative L1 transfer since when they wrote in English, they translated their ideas from their L1. Some prepositions in their L1 were translated into L2, but they were not correct as the Standard English used by English native speakers. The cause of errors in Thai EFL writers resulting from interlingual interference can also be found in many recent studies (e.g., Phuket & Othman, 2015; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). Their results indicate that learners' L1 plays a major role in their L2 learning and also leads to grammatical difficulties in L2 writing.

RQ 2. WHAT ARE THE MOST FREQUENT ERRORS MADE BY THAI EFL NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT THE SYNTACTIC LEVEL IN THEIR EFL WRITING CLASS?

TABLE 2. Types of errors and frequency at the sentence level

Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank	Example
Verb				
Omitting preparatory "to" after certain verb	16	0.78	18	You will have a chance (<i>to</i>) travel around the world.
Adding unnecessary verb	31	1.52	14	You <i>will should</i> have ability.
Wrong verb selection	72	3.52	7	You can <i>research</i> a boyfriend.
Using to+V1 instead of V1	34	1.66	12	You should <i>to learn</i> and practice English language.
Adding V ing instead of V1	84	4.11	6	It is important when you <i>looking</i> for work.
Adding -ing with verb after "to"	7	0.34	20	I love <i>to listening</i> to music very much.
Adding verb after prepositions	35	1.71	11	It is a general language <i>for communicate</i> around the world.
Using to+V ing instead of V1	5	0.24	21	It is basic that everyone must <i>to studying</i> English.
Verb to be (adding unnecessary verb to be)	49	2.40	9	It will <i>be</i> destroy your health.
Verb tenses	59	2.89	8	English is a language that many people around the world <i>used</i> .
Word order	23	1.13	17	You don't speak or read a <i>book English</i> .
Singular/plural	350	17.13	2	There are a lot of <i>advantage</i> of studying English.
Punctuation	349	17.08	3	All in all (,) you have to study English.
Capitalisation	391	19.14	1	First, <i>english</i> is important for my life.
Subject-verb agreement	140	6.85	5	<i>Every classroom</i> in the campus <i>have</i> air conditioners.
Relative clause	44	2.15	10	There are many companies (<i>that</i>) want people who can speak English well. (<i>missing "that" as relative pronoun</i>)
Sentence structure				
Fragment/ Subject or verb omission	257	12.58	4	Because the money you get per month is very high. I think it (<i>is</i>) very nice for everyone. (<i>missing verb</i>)
Run-on sentence	27	1.32	15	English is global language most of people in the world have to know it.
Comma splice	24	1.17	16	Every country in the world uses English, it is an international language.

Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank	Example
Conjunction				
Coordinating conjunction (i.e., for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)	32	1.57	13	Students use mobile phones to see movies, listen to music, see Facebook, Instagram. (<i>missing "and"</i>)
Subordinating conjunction (e.g., after, because, if, although)	13	0.64	19	<i>Although</i> you don't like it, <i>but</i> you should learn it.
Correlative conjunction (e.g., not only ... but also, both ... and)	1	0.05	22	<i>Not only</i> about job it's all about the education.
Total	2,043	100		

According to Table 2, the results show that, at the sentence level, capitalisation was the most common type of errors (391 errors, or 19.14%). It was followed by errors of singular/plural (17.13%), punctuation (17.08%), fragment / subject or verb omission (12.58%), and subject-verb agreement (6.85%), respectively. As it can be seen, the percentage among errors of capitalisation, singular/plural, and punctuation is not greatly different, so these are the main types of errors committed by these learners at the sentence level. The cause of these error types might be that capitalisation, singular/plural, and punctuation are not used in a Thai sentence; as a result, Thai EFL learners with incomplete knowledge of English grammar might make these errors because of the different uses between Thai and English. A clear explanation of these errors can be seen from the examples shown in Table 2.

The findings emerging from the present study do not lend support to Sermsook et al. (2017) whose research investigated errors in written English sentences of Thai EFL students and indicated that errors of punctuation and subject-verb agreement were the most frequently-made error types. However, based on their findings, capitalisation and fragments were the following rank error types committed by the learners at the sentence level, which is rather similar to those found in the present study. The reason for this might be due to Thai language interference.

In addition, the findings of the present study are different from those found in Sychandone (2016) who compared error types made by first, second, and third year English major students at Champasak University in Laos, and the results showed that, for syntactical error analysis, verb tenses were the most frequently committed errors by all these three groups of students. This might be because the writing topic assigned for the students in this present study did not require students to write about events in the past, so this type of error was not highly committed.

Interestingly, there are two unexpected error types found in data analysis. Firstly, it was adding verb after prepositions, for example, "It is a general language *for communicate* around the world." The other error type was using to + V ing instead of V1, such as "It is basic that everyone must *to studying* English." It should be noted that these two error types have not been categorised in the error analysis of any previous study. This error type might be caused by limited knowledge of English grammar which leads to making these errors (Olsen, 1999; Weigle, 2002).

RQ 3. WHAT ARE THE MOST FREQUENT ERRORS MADE BY THAI EFL NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL IN THEIR EFL WRITING CLASS?

TABLE 3. Types of errors and frequency at the paragraph level

Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Content			
Error in the topic	46	16.85	2
Error in semantics	52	19.05	1
Text organization			
Topic sentence with topic and controlling idea	25	9.16	5
Major and minor supporting sentences	33	12.09	3
Concluding sentence	32	11.72	4
Good coherence	52	19.05	1
Good use of cohesive devices	33	12.09	3
Total	273	100	

To answer this research question, Table 3 reveals that errors in semantics (52 errors, or 19.05%) and good coherence (19.05%) were the most common types of errors equally. It was followed by errors in the topic (16.85%). Errors in major and minor supporting sentences (12.09%) and good use of cohesive devices (12.09%) were made equally. Below are the examples of written texts that contain these mentioned errors.

“Next, can make work place foreign country. If you confident in English, you want to go exam to estimate for work place foreign country. Finally, can learn to expand at foreign country. Sometime learning to expand at foreign contry have knowledge more better Thailand. And you can used routine in foreign contry.” (from the written script of the student code 9)

“Second, social media makes you do not attend in class because you using it too much. Then, it makes you do not pass exam. Next, When you using social media a lot, it makes effect with your eyes. You will be blind person. Then, social media makes you spend money a lot because it can buy everything easy.” (from the written script of the student code 35)

“Then, body not good. you using social media, when you went use mobile phone or computer. There are effect to body because we must use eye see to phone. It can has bed eye. Finally, you can have offensive people. You can imitate by social media, such as you see criminal snatch bank, but don’t be indicted a charge. You doing follow they.” (from the written script of the student code 33)

These findings go parallel with the findings of Murad and Khalil (2015) who conducted a study investigating errors in English writings committed by Arab first-year college students and found that errors in semantics were the most frequently committed by these learners in the category of content. It can be explained that it might result from the literal translation from Thai. In addition, the errors in writing with good coherence was also in the same rank. This indicates that these two aspects were the main error types committed by the learners, and they might be connected since when the meanings of written sentences are unclear, they have negative impacts on the quality of linking a logical and orderly consistent relationship of all parts. Additionally, errors in the topic was in the second rank. It was revealed that when they wrote, good and interesting ideas were not well presented. Moreover, their writing still lacked excellent support and contained irrelevant sentences. Furthermore, major and minor supporting sentences, and good use of cohesive devices were the following rank errors. These errors also clearly affect the quality of the whole paragraph.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR L2 LEARNING AND TEACHING

There are five important implications for pedagogy that have emerged from the findings of this study. First of all, the errors committed by Thai EFL learners of this study can reveal real problems in their writing at the word, sentence, and paragraph levels. Writing teachers can utilise these errors in language teaching to improve the writing performance of their students. Secondly, based on the findings of this study, L1 interference and literal translation from Thai can have a negative influence on English writing, so the explanation for the differences between Thai and English should be made. Thirdly, the knowledge of some particular mechanics and grammar (e.g., spelling, prepositions, articles, capitalisation, singular/plural, punctuation, fragments, and subject-verb agreement) need to be taken into account. If EFL learners can use them correctly, they can certainly improve their English writing. Fourth, students should pay attention to the errors or language use that might cause misunderstanding or miscommunication. They can improve this by asking their peers to review or teachers to give comments on their writing so that such feedback can reflect how effective they write and also be valuable sources of information for their writing improvement. Finally, students need to be careful when they write in English. Revision is critical, especially in terms of checking for spelling, capitalisation, singular/plural, punctuation, and subject-verb agreement.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study identified different types of errors, numbers of errors, and the most frequently committed errors made by Thai EFL non-English major students in writing English paragraphs. The findings showed that, at the word level, the four most common error types were spelling, prepositions, word choice, and articles. At the sentence level, the four most frequently committed errors were capitalisation, singular/plural, punctuation, and fragment/ subject or verb omission. At the paragraph level, errors in semantics, good coherence, presenting a good and interesting topic, major and minor supporting sentences, and good use of cohesive devices were the most common types of errors. Therefore, this study sheds light on the writing difficulties of Thai EFL learners and also helps teachers consider the most common errors students made and use them as a teaching facilitator to improve students' writing performance. Also, this study suggests that teachers should take L1 interference, literal translation from Thai, limited knowledge of English grammar, awareness of the differences of grammar rules between Thai and English, and students' carelessness into consideration while teaching English writing.

The present study investigates errors of Thai EFL learners. However, the internal learning process was not the scope of this study. For further research, the researcher would like to recommend conducting qualitative research by interviewing EFL writing learners in order to elicit EFL learners' perceptions on writing process and error sources so as to reveal in-depth insight into an understanding of their writing process and difficulties they encounter when they write in English. In addition, since the scope of this present study was on investigating errors in paragraph writing, it is recommended to conduct another study to examine errors in various types of writing, either paragraph or essay levels, such as descriptive, narrative, persuasive, and argumentative writing committed by Thai EFL writing learners. These would provide worthy avenues for future research.

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