



Thai EFL Senior High School Students' Errors in Paragraph Writing

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ABSTRACT

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The present study aims to analyze errors occurred in the process of paragraph writing of Thai EFL secondary students in Amnat Charoen province in Thailand. Amnat Charoen is a small province situated in central northeastern Thailand. Most researchers have explored error analysis (EA) focusing particularly on undergraduate students, few studies have been done at a secondary level. The written paragraphs were collected at 7 major secondary schools in 7 districts in Amnat Charoen province, taking extracts of 210 written paragraphs. The writing errors were collected, labeled and categorized into elements of syntax, grammar, mechanics and etc. The findings illustrated that the following errors occurred, percentage indicating the level of occurrence capitalization (82%), punctuation (57%), contraction (43%), fragments (43%), run-ons (39%), subject-verb agreement (22%), spelling (20%), conjunctions (20%), tenses (18%) and comma splices (12%). The results of error analysis could be useful as pedagogical implications for teachers who design and select teaching materials, involved with paragraph writing suitable for the learners' needs.

KEYWORDS

error analysis, writing difficulties, paragraph writing, high school students, Thai EFL

1. Introduction

Most researchers point out that writing is the most difficult skill for English and all language. Nunan (1989) found that writing fluently and expressively was the most difficult of the macroskills for all language users regardless of whether the language in question was a first (L1), second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL). Hinkel (2004) also stated that writing in a second or foreign language was a challenging task, which required the attainment of sufficient linguistic proficiency. Shangarfan and Mamipour (2011) also noted that for many years researchers have been interested in writing as a crucial skill in learning language without which further education may be largely impossible. In addition, some researchers have also pointed out that teaching writing as a foreign language is not successful for the following reasons: mother tongue, over generalization, lack of motivation and teaching techniques. Thus, it is a challenging work for teachers to enhance writing skill among EFL learners. It is also agreed that the ability to compose good paragraphs is not gained by chance, but derives from practice, experiences and knowledge about target topics. In other words, EFL learners have to use knowledge of subject matter and linguistic features while preparing a piece of writing. Researchers have found that ESL/EFL learners encounter difficulties when they are on the process of writing such as spelling, grammar, syntax, cohesion and other features (Bahri and Sugeng 2010, Harmer 2001, Jiménez et al. 2013, Schoonen et al. 2009). The level of difficulties depends on the level of learners' skill (Singleton-Jackson 2003). This implies that different contexts of learners face different difficulties.

As mentioned above, EFL students face difficulties during the process of writing and errors are considered as proof that students face difficulties during writing. The emergence of error analysis (EA) was first established in the 1970s by Corder (1973) who defined EA as a type of linguistic study that focuses on the errors learners make. Later, James (2013) defined that systematic errors are errors of competence while non-systematic errors are errors of performance which should be called mistakes. Learners can identify mistakes by themselves, but systematic errors cannot be resolved by learners without assistance. Thus, focusing on systematic errors would be fruitful, for it is possible to foster learners' current knowledge of the target language or compensate for their lack of it. To do this, it was essential for teachers to be aware of the type of errors that students make to be able to prioritize and tackle these errors effectively. In addition, Sawalmeh (2013) stated that error analysis is a way which teachers could use to identify students' difficulties in writing so that remedies can be put in place to improve writing instruction in the future.

Previous studies have illustrated that EFL/ESL students in different context have faced with different difficulties and errors in English writing. Most researchers have explored the writing errors of undergraduate students (Abderraouf 2016, Al-Khasawneh 2014, Sermsook et al. 2017, Xie, 2019). However, few studies have analyzed writing errors at EFL students in secondary level. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the common writing errors of EFL senior high school students (Matayom 6) in English paragraph writing. The participants (n = 210) were randomly selected senior high school students from seven schools in Amnat Charoen province in Thailand. To achieve the research aims, a corpus analysis was employed to analyze 210 paragraph writing tasks to investigate two questions:

- 1) What types of errors are evident in paragraph writing by Thai EFL secondary level students?
- 2) What are the sources of these errors?

The findings are expected to assist teachers to take students' writing problems into account when planning learning activities with a focus on frequent errors.

2. Literature Review

In this section, the elements of writing, previous studies on error analysis and information about Amnat Charoen are illustrated.

2.1 Elements of Writing

According to Raimes (1983), a good piece of writing contains the elements shown in Figure 1.

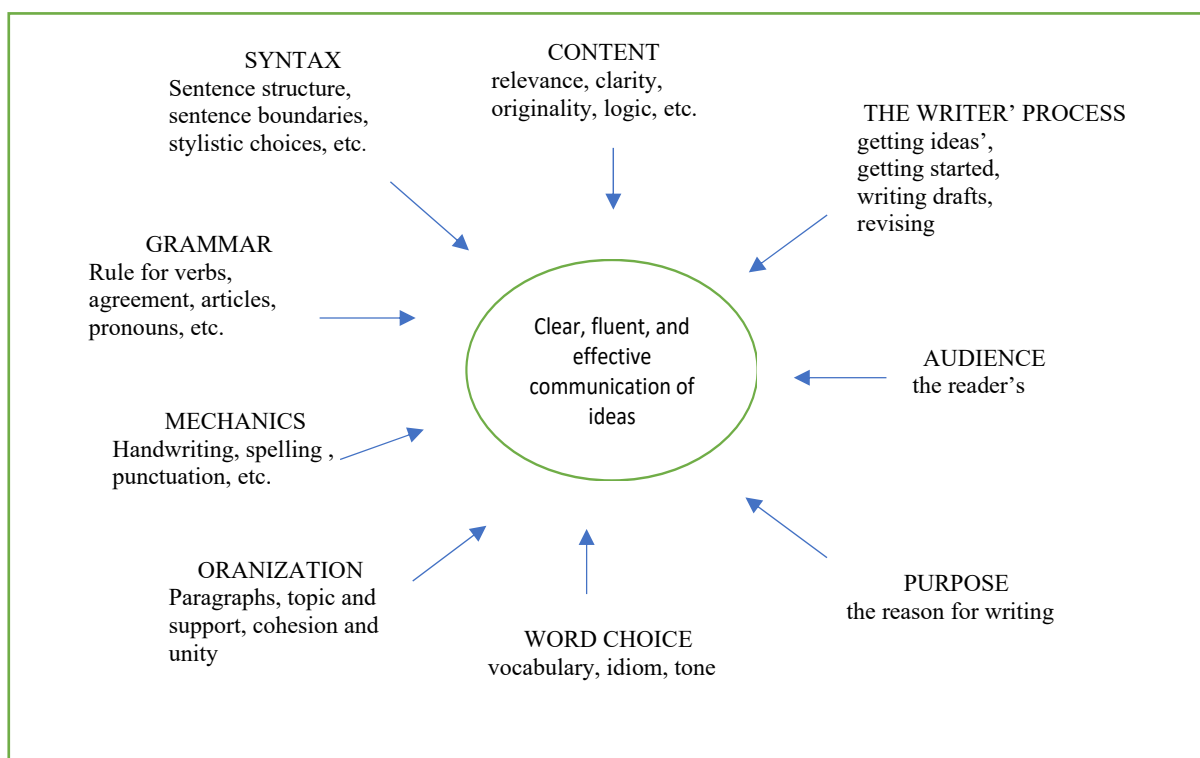


Figure 1. Elements of writing (Raimes 1983: 6)

Figure 1 illustrates that creating a good piece of writing is an elaborate task requiring various knowledge, skills and steps. Teaching writing for EFL learners is quite difficult, for it is time consuming for teachers who have to teach students about syntax, grammar, mechanics, and organization. In addition, students need practice to ‘sharpen’ or ‘improve’ writing skills.

2.2 Writing Difficulties and Error Analysis of ESL/EFL Students' Writing

Researchers have found that ESL/EFL students encounter various difficulties when they write in English (Banacha 2013, Harmer 2001, Jiménez et al. 2013). Singleton-Jackson (2003) stated that writers of different skill levels employ different approaches to writing. Expert writers made appropriate responses to factors such as rhetorical questions, tend to start their writing by focusing on the problem and purpose of writing and take much time to revise their ideas before writing. On the other hand, novice writers have a tendency to write like they talk,

and to put less effort into the writing and planning process. Schoonen et al. (2009) mentioned that EFL writers are influenced by their experience in writing in their L1 and FL writing situation, and that their limited linguistic knowledge impeded the use of metacognitive knowledge. Bahri and Sugeng (2010) stated that students have difficulties because of poor understanding of grammar which results in problems arranging proper sentences. Llosa et al. (2011) explored the challenges ESL secondary students faced during academic writing and found that students had limited ability to translate ideas into written English and low ability to find appropriate English words to express their thoughts.

Recently, Al-Khasawneh (2014) analyzed a corpus of 26 students' paragraph writing at Ajloun National University in Jordan. Errors were found with spelling, word order, and subject-verb agreement. The findings could then be used to help teachers prepare lesson plans which focused on remedying the students' difficulties with written text. Next, Abderraouf's (2016) analysis of third year students' essays at the English Department at the University of Bejaia in Algeria revealed various problems in their writing. Students failed to use the academic register in writing, had low proficiency in vocabulary use, and misused lexical items. In addition, students were likely to use long sentences and fail to use punctuation which resulted in ambiguous statements which obstructed the clarity of messages. The students displayed difficulty when beginning to write, developing ideas, using technical skills and appropriate written compositions. This revealed that students faced various difficulties and encountered different problems during their writing composition. Seitova (2016) did a study about error analysis of written production of grade 6 students in a Kazakhstani primary school. It was found that the seven most common errors were: pluralization, subject-verb agreement, omission or misuse of articles, wrong choices of words, omission of preposition, spelling and misuse of like + V. ing form. The pedagogical implications of these findings were also identified.

Furthermore, Sermsook et al. (2017) analyzed the errors in written English sentences by Thai EFL university students completing a major in English. They found that the most prominent errors were punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, capitalization and fragments. They identified the sources of these errors as: interlingual interference, intralingual interference, limited knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, and carelessness. Extensive knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary was suggested as a way to reduce these errors. Xie (2019) developed a diagnostic tool focused on a specific aspect of ESL writing and conducted an analysis of errors which appeared in ESL university students' English academic essays in Hong Kong. Thirty-three errors were identified, the usage of prepositions being the most prevalent followed by errors with agreement, verb tense and collocation. The findings provide an empirical basis for ESL linguistic accuracy for Chinese university students in Hong Kong. Lastly, Nair (2021) explored how Tamil language interfered English essay writing among students from a Tamil school. The results illustrated the common errors in five areas: vocabulary, tenses, spelling, subject-verb agreement and pronouns. Some errors were interlanguage errors which originated from confusion in structures of Tamil, Malay and English. Basic grammatical rules and sentence structures are suggested for writing effectively.

In conclusion, previous studies on difficulties and errors in English writing found that ESL/EFL learners encountered many difficulties: spelling, grammar, cohesion, punctuation, preposition, article, capitalization, fragments, tense, and vocabulary, etc. These difficulties can be categorized into main types of writing elements: syntax, grammar, mechanics, organization and word choice, etc. Except these difficulties, ESL/EFL learners also confronted difficulties about metacognitive knowledge and L1 interference. In addition, the process of writing between expert and novice writers is totally different. This can be assumed that there are various difficulties that ESL/EFL learners face which depends on the context and level of learners. Thus, it is essential that language

teachers should analyze the difficulties confronted by particular learners in different contexts to prepare suitable teaching material and proper lessons plan.

2.2 Research Context: Amnat Charoen Province, Thailand

The data collected from 7 major schools in 7 districts in Amnat Charoen province. The 7 districts are Muang, Phana, Lue Amnat, Senangkhanikom, Hua Thapan, Pathum Ratchawongsa and Chanuman.

Amnat Charoen is a province in central northeastern Thailand. It became a province in January 1993, when it was separated from Ubon Ratchathani province. According to National Statistical Office Thailand (NSO), one family's average income per month is 20,000 Thai Baht or 600 US Dollars while in Bangkok the average income is 40,000 Thai Baht or 1,200 US Dollars. From this statistic data, Amnat Charoen province is categorized in low income group. Amnat Charoen aims to be a hub for organic farming which plant Jasmine rice and vegetables. Amnat Charoen people agree to name the model of making organic farming as "Dhamma Agriculture" which means organic and fair agriculture. In the survey of Office of Agriculture Economics, Amnat Charoen had a total of 141,359.84 hectare to plant Jasmine rice. Most of the population work in agricultural sector.

In 2014, United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) provided educational index for 76 provinces in Thailand which covers 4 areas: number of academic years, high school attendance rate, intelligence level and O-Net score. Amnat Charoen's educational index was categorized in low group.

For education proficiency of Thai EFL secondary level, O-NET (Ordinary National Education Test) scores are used to assess students' proficiency. O-NET assessments are organized by the National Institute of Educational Testing Service which tests for four subjects: math, sciences, Thai and English. In the year 2018, the average O-NET English score of secondary schools in Amnat Charoen was 30.91 while the average score of students in Bangkok (the capital city of Thailand) was 42.51. The scores illustrate that English proficiency of students in Amnat Charoen is in lowest group. The mentioned data shows that Amnat Charoen is needed to be supported for income and education.

3. Method

The present study examined errors in a corpus of 210 pieces of paragraph writing collected from 7 schools from 7 districts in Amnat Charoen province in Thailand. The 7 schools are Amnat Charoen School (AMS), Chanuman Vitayakom School (CNS), Lue Amnat Vitayakom School (LAS), Senangkanikom School (SNS), Panasuksa School (PNS), Huatapan School (HTS), Pathumratchavongsa School (PTS).

Errors were identified, counted and classified into categories to detect the prominent errors done by the participants. According to Ellis (1994), there are four steps in procedural error analysis: collection of samples of learner language, identification of errors, description of errors and evaluation of errors. Ellis' procedural error analysis was employed to analyze the corpus of 210 written paragraph.

3.1 Participants

The participants in the present study were senior high school students from 7 major schools in 7 districts in Amnat Charoen province, Thailand. From visiting 7 schools in each district, it can be assumed that most participants were grown up in agricultural background family. As mentioned above, the level of English

proficiency of Amnat Charoen students was in low group. Language teachers in this context could make use of error analysis in the process of writing to explore the particular difficulties confronted by the participants to prepare the suitable teaching strategies and materials.

3.2 Collection of Samples of Learner Language

One major school was chosen from 7 districts in Amnat Charoen province, Thailand. English teachers in seven schools asked a randomly selected sample ($n = 30$) of senior high school students (Matayom 6) to choose a topic and to write a paragraph. The alternative five topics given to students were: My School, My Family, My Pets, My Holiday, and My Country. The 30 pieces of paragraph writing were collected from each school (total equals 210). The students wrote paragraphs in classroom and they were not allowed to use dictionary. The participants had learned English as a foreign language for at least 7 years.

3.3 Identification of Errors

The elements of writing (Raimes, 1983) was the framework of errors analysis (See Figure 1) in the present study. Raimes (1983) defined that the clear, fluent and effective communication of ideas in a piece of writing consists of the writer's process, audience, purpose, word choice, organization, mechanics, grammar, syntax, and content. In each elements, there are some sub elements such as sentence structure, articles, pronouns, spelling, punctuation, cohesion, paragraph, vocabulary, etc. All of the collected written paragraphs were analyzed and labeled according to the types of errors. When calculating the frequency of errors, each error was counted only once even though it may have been evident several times in a piece of writing paragraph. To avoid a fault in error analysis, an inter-rater was invited to analyze 25% of the corpus. The invited inter-rater is a university lecturer who is an expert in English language teaching and linguistics. Then the two sets of error analysis done by two researchers were compared using percentage agreement as a criterion. The percentage agreement was over 95%.

3.4 Description of Errors

After errors were analyzed and labeled, these errors were classified according to errors taxonomies: organization, mechanics, grammar, syntax, and content, etc. Then the frequency of all categories were calculated into percentage and ranked. The ranking could illustrate the errors trends in the present context.

3.5 Evaluation of Errors

The evaluation of errors is an identification of errors' sources. This stage could detect the origin of errors in depth and in width which can be fruitful for language teachers to reconsider language learning material.

It is known that many researchers have done errors analysis for many years, but the different context and different participants reflect different outcomes. It is hope that the result of the present study could be the reflection of writing difficulties of Thai EFL senior high school students in Amnat Charoen province.

4. Findings

This section presents what types of errors are evident in paragraph writing by Thai EFL secondary level students. The errors found in paragraph writing are presented by types of errors, frequency of errors, percentage of errors and ranking. As shown in Table 1, the students' errors were classified into four types: mechanics, grammar, syntax and organization. Capitalization (82%) and punctuation (57%), which compromised more than 50% of the errors, were errors classified as 'mechanics'. The remainder of the errors in this category occurred in less than 50% of the sample paragraphs. Errors about grammar and syntax were within range of 15%-43%. The errors on fragments and run-ons were at 43% and 39%, respectively. The category of errors with the lowest frequency (12%) was comma splices. It is clear that the students did not do well with some aspects of the mechanics and syntax of writing which refer to the rules of the written language.

Table 1. Error Frequency in Paragraph Writing by 210 Senior High School Students in Amnat Charoen Province

Types of Errors	Frequency of Errors	Percentage (%) of errors	Ranking
Mechanics			
Capitalization	174	82	1
Punctuation	120	57	2
Contraction	91	43	3
Spelling	64	20	6
Comma splices	25	12	9
Grammar			
Subject –Verb Agreement	48	22	5
Verb Tenses	38	18	7
Pronouns	32	15	8
Syntax			
Fragments	92	43	3
Run- ons	81	39	4
Conjunctions	42	20	6
Organization			
Paragraph Format	82	39	4

Extracts of twelve types of errors are illustrated in the next section.

4.1 Capitalization

In English there are many rules for using capital letters: first word in a sentence, pronoun 'I', abbreviations and acronyms, and proper nouns. Extracts of errors by senior high school students are illustrated in the following extracts.

Extracts

1. My dog like My bed sofa. (PNS 21)
2. my family is thai. my family is very happy. (LAS 21)
3. In Vacation on Saturday. (PNS 15)
4. My family has 4 People, My father, My Mother, My little brother and I. (PTS 3)
5. Thailand is good Place to live because there are only kind people good atmosphere. (CNS 7)

6. In my family father and Mother like to go to temple but sister like to go to sea. (AMS 16)
7. In the future I want to be a teacher Because I want to give knowledge to others. (SNS 11)
8. Firstly, It is cute and charming pets that will make everyone fall in love. (HTS 9)

As noted in Table 1, capitalization errors (82%) were the most frequent. These can be explained by the students' lack of awareness of the rules for using capital letters with the first word in a sentence, the pronoun 'I', and all proper nouns. It was also found that some students used capital letters after commas, and used capital letters for subordinators that appear in the middle of sentences. They also capitalized letters for words in the middle of sentences. Another explanation is that because there are no capitalization rules in Thai language, they may not realize the need to make changes with letters, the pronoun 'I', and proper nouns.

4.2 Punctuation Marks

As shown on Table 1, errors with punctuation marks (57%) were the second most frequent source of errors. The punctuation errors occurred with comma (,) and period (.) as shown in the following extracts.

Extracts

1. First I have to say thank you for my parents. (AMS 4)
2. My father is working hard to raise money for the family_ to make the family happy. (CNS 3)
3. I like to play football, volleyball, run and futsal_(SNS 11)
4. I am one who like to feed animals and love pets very much_(HTS 9)
5. My mother is a farmer_My sister is a students and me is a student_ (LAS 24)
6. But for me, my happiness is from my pets_(PNS 2)
7. I want to learn English to understand more_ because I want to study Faculty of Humanities. (PTS 18)
8. My family has father_mother_grand mother_brother and me_(HTS 15)

Many of the errors occurred because students did not put the period at the end of a sentence. They also omitted to add commas where necessary: in compound sentence, lists of items, and time order signal. Moreover, they also added commas where they were not needed such as in front of a subordinator. Clearly, students did not understand the rules of using commas and periods. Another important point is that the rules of using commas and periods in Thai language are totally different.

4.3 Fragments

In some languages, it is possible to leave out a subject or a verb in a sentence. For instance, in spoken Thai language, a subject or a verb is always omitted to make it short. However, English is different. In each sentence, users must always have at least one subject-verb combination. If users leave out either a subject or a verb, a sentence is incomplete which is called a fragment. The data in Table 1 collected from the Thai students revealed many fragments in the paragraph writing (43%) as illustrated in the following extracts.

Extracts

1. Have a father, mother, brother and myself. (HTS. 23)
2. Is studying in high school, PATUNRACHWONGSA School. (PTS 4)

3. They so kind. (PNS 22)
4. Help teach your homework. (HTS 10)
5. They my father, my mother, my sister Bow and me. (LAS 28)
6. And can live together well and have unity among the group. (HTS 13)
7. Payut and pawit it so fat ..., (PNS 24)
8. Studying at pathum Ratchawongsa school. (PTS 5)

Errors can be categorized into two groups: omission of a subject or a verb. The causes of these errors would be the literal translation of Thai spoken language into written English. Moreover, the students were not aware of subject-verb combination. They simply translated from Thai language into written English, and they were not aware of rules regarding English sentence structure.

4.4 Contraction

According to Oshima and Hogue (2017), contractions are used in conversation and in informal writing such as letters to friends but not in formal writing. However, it was found that contractions were frequently (43%) used by the students in paragraph writing.

Extracts

1. I don't like to wake up early. (AMS 2)
2. I m stressed and pressured myself a lot. (HTS 21)
3. I don't like Eng. (PTS 2)
4. I m from Thailand. (PNS 28)
5. It's a cute rat. (HTS 12)
6. But he doesn't like to have things that don't like that is fish. (LAS 5)
7. I m excited to try something new. (CNS 21)
8. I don't like being the youngest. (SNS 9)

From the extracts above, it could be assumed that the students transferred spoken language into written language and that they might not know the rules of using contractions in formal writing.

4.5 Run-ons

According to Oshima and Hogue (2017), a run-on happens when writers join two simple sentences without a comma and without a connecting word. The data collected showed that 39% of the students made errors on run-on sentences. (See Table 1)

Extracts

1. The sea is beautiful it have coconut on the beach. (AMS 9)
2. My family has four people have parents, younger and me My parents are kind. (CNS 4)
3. My name is Sasithorn Thammacharoen I am 18 years old. (SNS 6)
4. Another one dog is Thai dog her name is Kaitom. (AMS 12)
5. I love this family I am proud to be born as a child. (HTS 22)

6. Thailand is the land of smile Thai people are very friendly (PNS 25)
7. My name is Phonphimon Saechao my nick name is Noon (PTS 1)
8. My family is Thai Dad likes to cook. (LAS 21)

The errors in these extracts could be explained as the students not being aware that a sentence is a group of words that contains at least one subject and verb and expresses a complete thought. In addition, they might not be aware of the need to put the period at the end of a sentence and to begin a new sentence with a capital letter.

4.6 Paragraph Format

It was found that 39% of students (Table 1) made errors related to paragraph format. According to Oshima and Hogue (2017), a paragraph is a group of related sentences that focus on and develop one topic. The first sentence states the specific point or explains the controlling idea of the topic to readers. The rest of the sentences in the paragraph support the controlling idea. In addition, the correct paragraph format should center the title of a paragraph on the first line. Also, the first sentence from the left margin should be indented. The extracts below show students' errors with the paragraph format.

Many students were not aware that a paragraph needed to start with an indented sentence. Some students did not indent the first sentence but indented the following sentences. Some students did not make any indents in writing a paragraph and started all sentences on the left margin of the page. Some students also made several unnecessary indents in the body of the paragraph. It was noticeable that they did not make error about the title of the paragraph. All students centered the title on the first line.

4.7 Subject-verb Agreement

As reported in Table 1, 22% of errors occurred with subject-verb agreement. Errors about subject-verb agreement are frequently made by EFL students and have been reported by many researchers. The causes of these errors for Thai EFL students would be the different grammatical rules between Thai and English. There is no rule about verb conjugation in Thai language, so it is quite difficult for Thai EFL students to conjugate verbs when writing English.

Extracts

1. First one grandfather sit and sleep. (HTS 28)
2. My dog like bite (PNS 21)
3. My sister is a students and me is a students (LAS 24)
4. Three dogs is two years old. (SNS 22)
5. It make me relaxing (AMS 26)
6. My parents is someone who support all children (CNS 10)
7. I doesn't like English (PTS 28)
8. It like to eat everything except rice. (LAS 3)

These extracts illustrate that the students were not aware that subject and verb agree in numbers. They also did not know which subjects are plural or singular and, as a result they could not conjugate verbs correctly.

4.8 Spelling

In all, 20% of errors concerned spelling (Table 1). Spelling errors are common among EFL learners because of the high level of effort required to achieve spelling proficiency. The extracts below show the spelling errors made by the students.

Extracts

1. My mother gife a dog for me. (PNS 21)
2. My father is a famer. (LAS.24)
3. Som days, if the rein is heavy, the parents do not go to tapping rubber. (HTS 26)
4. There is a grandmother, father, mother, brothe, sister and me. (CNS 12)
5. My favorit color is blue. (PTS 7)
- 6 ... there are a lot fo tourist attractions ... (AMS 11)
7. She is a cat breed persai. (LAS 6)
8. She love dog very mush. (HTS 2)

According to Bancha (2013), there were 10 types of spelling errors. 7 types: consonants substitutions, consonant omission, space inaccuracy, inflectional endings, letter reversals, vowel substitutions, confusion of writing scripts were found in the present study. These extracts illustrated that the causes of errors derived from the irregularities of the English spelling system and students' inadequate knowledge of phonology, morphology and orthography.

4.9 Conjunctions

In all, 20% of errors were with conjunctions (Table 1). The extracts below illustrate these errors.

Extracts

1. I like sit read the book in Café. (PNS 26)
2. They have a farming career. But I have a duty to study. (LAS 21)
3. I want to be as good as him. And my dream is to be a footballer. (HTS 27)
4. I am very close to my 2 dogs. But they are my Siberian Husky. (SNS 23)
5. ... we go to school by car. And when I finished school I have to wait her... (AMS 22)
6. It likes to run along me. And the last make is brownie... (CNS 25)
7. Although it is difficult, but it does not exceed my ability to do it. (PTS 25)
8. My father is not strict about school and activities. But my father still supports me ... (PTS 7)

The extracts illustrate that the students had limited knowledge about conjunction usage. They did not know that conjunctions were used to join words, phrases and clauses. They also did not know how to use commas with conjunctions in compound sentences. They also incorrectly used more than one conjunction (as shown in Extract 7). Moreover, some students began a new sentence by using a conjunction and/or capitalized a conjunction.

4.10 Tenses

As reported in Table 1, 18% of errors concerned tense.

Extracts

1. I living with my comfort family there are 4 people. (AMS 22)
2. My family there are 4 people. had a father, had a mother, had a younger sister and me. (CNS 26)
3. I studying Patumrachwongsa School... (PTS 21)
4. My brother studying at university... (PNS 23)
5. I live with grandma because my mother had to go to work ... (HTS 21)
6. She is 49 years old. She raised we all three. (SNS 28)
7. I studied at senangthanikhom school. (SNS 6)
8. My sister she studying at University ... (SNS 8)

From these extracts, it seems that some students had limited knowledge about forms and rules of tense: present simple, past simple and present continuous. The errors may also have occurred when the students translated Thai into English (see Extract 2) because the forms and rules of tense in Thai language are totally different from English.

4.11 Pronoun

Table 1 shows that 15% of errors were about the use of pronouns.

Extracts

1. I want to stay together with she in everywhere. (AMS 23)
2. My sister is a students and me is a students. (LAS 24)
3. Her has white fur. (LAS 3)
4. His name is Jina. She is a cat ... (LAS 6)
5. And me well I am also tall. (LAS 11)
6. My sister is 27 years old, and me is 17 years old. (LAS 16)
7. My grandfather and grandmother they career farmers ... (SNS 8)
8. My father and my mother they is farmer. (SNS 15)

It seems that many students were confused about subject pronouns, object pronouns and possessive adjectives. As a result, they put object pronouns in the position of subject pronouns and vice versa. The repetition of the subjects of a sentence and the subject pronoun (as in Extract 8) were also found in some cases. In addition, errors occurred with the possessive adjective for male and female (as in Extract 4).

4.12 Comma Splice

Comma splice refers to an instance of using a comma to link two independent clauses which should be linked by a colon, semicolon or conjunction. Comma splices comprised 12% of errors (Table 1).

Extracts

1. My father have his business he work hard for our family_ he is a smart guy_ he can take care ... (AMS 22)
2. I have my young sister_ my feeling likes I win the lottery. (AMS 23)
3. Father likes to feed pet_ Brother like to play football_ Mother like to do houseworking. (CNS 29)'
4. ... I will saw tree everywhere_ I like it so much it make me fresh. (PNS 30)

5. ... my family has 4 people, I am the only child. (HTS 25)
6. My name is Parinada Tongburan nickname joy, I'm 18 years old. (PTS 3)
7. I like watching the racing, The racker named ... (PTS 4)
8. She is a teacher, she work at (AMS 14)

These extracts show that students were unaware of the rules for using commas. Commas were placed after transition signals or prepositional phrases at the beginning of a sentence, before coordination conjunctions in compound sentences, after dependent clauses in complex sentences and to separate items in series. The students also put commas at the end of sentences that were followed by another sentence, and they added commas randomly.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aims to answer 2 questions: 1) what types of errors are evident in paragraph writing by Thai EFL secondary in Amnat Charoen province, Thailand; 2) what are the sources of these errors. Error analysis is an essential aid to identify and explain difficulties faced by learners which can be useful for teachers to plan and set strategies in teaching writing. Seitova (2016) found that spelling and preposition errors are the most common among Kazakhstani students. Sermsook (2017) found that punctuation, articles and subject-verb agreement are the most frequent errors among Thai EFL university students. In addition, the sources of errors are interlingual interference, intralingual interference, limited knowledge of English grammars and vocabulary, and students carelessness. Moreover, the differences and similarities between the target language rules and students' first language should be taken into account. Teachers and teaching methods also play an important role. Previous study illustrated that learners from different nationalities face different difficulties in writing English. In addition, the level of students is also a factor to be considered.

In the present study, the frequent errors made by Thai senior high school students were capitalization, punctuation, contraction, fragment and run-ons. Punctuation errors in the present study were similar errors to those reported by Sermsook (2017). However, some results differed from Sermsook's findings. While the two studies were completed with students with the same nationality, the different level of the students resulted in different findings. Thus, error analysis is conducted in a specific context and care needs to be taken about generalizing results.

The four frequent errors that the students in this study made were capitalization (82%), punctuation (57%), contraction (43%) and fragments (43%). The first three errors (capitalization, punctuation, contraction) are categorized in mechanics. According to Raimes (1983), writing mechanics are the conventions governing the technical aspects of writing: spelling, punctuation, capitalization and abbreviations. The results in this study illustrate that the senior high school students were severely lacking of knowledge about mechanics.

There are no rules of capitalization and punctuation in Thai. Thai language consists of lowercase texting. The capitalization of proper nouns is very challenging for Thai students and they face difficulties in mastering the rules of capitalization.

In English, punctuation marks are signposts which give directions to readers about the meaning of a sentence. Thai language has different punctuation rules. Therefore, Thai students face difficulties in formal writing. Many could not use punctuation (comma and period) effectively to make the meaning of the sentence clear.

The misuse of contractions was found when Thai students translate verbatim the exact sound people use in spoken language. That is, they write down words that they have heard when people speak without realizing that

contractions are not used in formal writing. In Thai language, the contractions of sound and form are also used in spoken language. In similar manner, these kinds of contractions are not used in formal written Thai language.

A fragment can be classified into two main types: missing subjects or missing verbs. The source of errors could derive from the literal translation of spoken Thai language into written English since Thai language can leave out subjects or verbs when Thai people speak.

According to Sawalmeh (2013), the sources of errors are interlingual errors and intralingual errors. First, interlingual errors are those errors that are traceable to first language interference such as lexical errors, grammatical errors, or pragmatic errors. Second, intralingual errors result from faulty or partial learning of the target language. It can be attributed to the ignorance of rule restrictions, imperfect implementation of rules, and false concepts assumed which all lead to overgeneralization. The errors found in the present study are illustrated in the following figure.

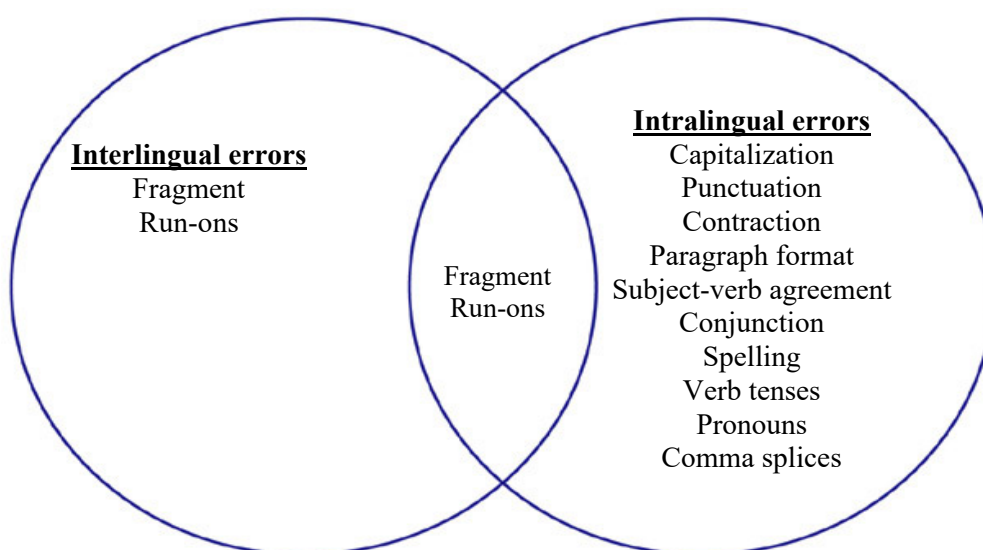


Figure 2. Interlingual and intralingual errors

Figure 2 illustrates that ‘fragment’ and ‘run-ons’ occur in both sources of errors. In Thai language, the omission of the subject or verb does not result in errors especially in spoken language. Thai students also make this error when telling or explaining people’s states and feelings. In Thai, they can use subject plus state or feeling. Therefore, when they want to explain states or feelings in English they will do like they do in Thai language. Consequently, they will make errors such as ‘They so kind’ and ‘It so good for my heart’. This results from the interference of the first language. Moreover, they may not know that the verb ‘to be’ is used to describe people’s states and feelings. In conclusion, the sources of fragments are both interlingual and intralingual errors.

In Thai, a student can write a sentence continuously without adding conjunctions, but it is totally different in English. Thus, a run-on sentence may result from first language interference and inadequate knowledge about the use of conjunctions.

5.1 Pedagogical Implications

As discussed above, students in different levels and from different nationalities face several difficulties when they write an English paragraph. Errors arise when learning is in progress, and error analysis explains the difficulties learners face from low to severe level. This is important for teachers who, when designing their lesson plans need to select teaching materials that match the learners' needs. Table 2 summarizes the sources of errors and possible treatments.

Table 2. Summary of Errors Frequency, Sources of Errors and Possible Treatments

Types of errors	Frequency	Sources of errors	Learning activities
Capitalization	82%	Intralingual errors	- Design lessons involving capitalization rules. - Practice using capitalization rules.
Punctuation	57%	Intralingual errors	- Design lessons relating to punctuation rules. - Practice using punctuation rules.
Contraction	43%	Intralingual errors	- Inform students about 'do's and don'ts' in written language.
Fragment	43%	Intralingual/ Interlingual errors	- Teach students how to check for and correct fragment. - Practice identifying and correcting fragment.
Run-ons	39%	Intralingual/ Interlingual errors	- Teach students how to join sentences correctly. - Practice identifying and correcting run-ons.
Paragraph format	39%	Intralingual errors	- Show and suggest the correct paragraph format. - Practice identifying and correcting incorrect paragraph format.
Subject-verb agreement	22%	Intralingual errors	- Design lessons relating to subject-verb agreement. - Practice doing exercises about subject-verb agreement.
Conjunctions	20%	Intralingual errors	- Design lessons about conjunctions. - Practice doing exercises about conjunctions.
Spelling	20%	Intralingual errors	- Demonstrate ways students can memorize vocabularies.
Verb tenses	18%	Intralingual errors	- Design lessons focusing on verb tenses. - Practice doing exercises about verb tenses.
Pronouns	15%	Intralingual errors	- Design lessons relating to types and function of pronouns. - Practice doing exercises about using pronoun.
Comma splices	12%	Intralingual errors	- Teach students how to join sentences correctly. - Practice identifying and correcting comma splices in class.

5.2 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The results of the present study illustrates the errors of Thai EFL secondary level in Amnat Charoen province which is small province in Thailand. The results obtained can be used to enhance instruction, assisting teachers to organize lessons plans and prepare instructional strategies which focus on the most frequent errors. Another

noticeable finding was that learners in different levels and different geographic areas make different errors. Therefore, language teachers should not generalize about learners' errors from one level to another level or from one area to another area. The errors found in the present study is limited to the small groups of Thai EFL in one province in Thailand. Thus, the further research should be done in different province in Thailand or in different countries to identify the errors in paragraph writing. In short, EA is helpful in the process of learning because it enables teachers to put the correct strategies in place to remedy errors in a timely way.

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Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Level: Secondary