HS027

A Contrastive Analysis of Passive Voice Errors in English Paragraph Writing Made by Cambodian and Thai EFL University Students

Samnang Voun[1]

Dr.Kampeeraphab Intanoo[2]

Asst.Pro.Dr.Nawamin Prachanant[3]

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate and compare types of passive voice errors in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students. The samples were from two groups: 32 Cambodian students who studied at Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and 30 Thai students who studied at Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand. Both groups of sample were selected by using purposive sampling technique. The research instruments were writing test and interview.The obtained data from writing test was analyzed based on Azar Schrampfer (1985) error in passive voice area. Information from interviewing was analyzed by content analysis. The collected data was coded by experts, advisors and researcher to find more reliable in the study. The statistics used for analyzing from writing test were frequency and percentage.

The findings revealed that four types of passive voice errors were found from both groups. Passive voice errors were found in Thai EFL university students' group more than Cambodian EFLuniversity students' group. In addition, the complication of passive voice forms, lack of students' interest, lack of teachers' attention and lack of constantly practice writing were problems in passive voice errors in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students.

Keywords: Errors, Passive voice, Paragraph writing, Cambodian EFL university students, Thai EFL university students

---

[1-3]English Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences BuriramRajabhat University

Introduction

English is become a popular language for people around the world. English is used as a mean to transfer thoughts and cultures and to create good relationships between people in different countries. It has functioned as the common language of communication for ASEAN since its founding, it first became official with the signing of the ASEAN Charter in November 2007, when in Article 34 official the members affirmed that "The working language of ASEAN shall be English" (ASEAN Charter 2008). English is playing a main role for nowadays technology improvement in many sectors includes medicine, engineering, science and education. It is accepted as the best medium to better education and high quality job requirement opportunities.

Writing is the most difficult productive skill among four English skills; reading, listening, speaking and writing. It requires all learners have to understand the process in learning English grammar. Writing is a critical skill that demand learners take much time to learn or practice. It is the most burdensome skill to learn because its complex procedure which is reversing the writers' communicative skills (Shokrpoure&Fallahzadeh, 2008). However, writing is able to provide learners to expand their ability in planning, organizing and reflecting in English structure. It helps learners to have opportunities to adventure with the language, to go beyond what they have learned (Raimes, 1983). Hedge (1988) also states that a good deal of writing in the English language classroom is undertaken as an aid to learning; for instance, to consolidate the learning of new structures or vocabulary or to help students remember new items of language.

Passive voice is one type among many main aspects of English grammar instruction. Passive voice is usually used in written form than spoken. It is focused on a common writing and other types of expression where the writers are most interested in events or process in the things that happen or sentences that the subject receives the action. Dixon (1986) declares that the passive voice is formed by using the verb to be used as an auxiliary and the past participle of the main verb. It is mostly seen in form of academic writing or English teaching grammar syllabus so learners should have a good understanding.

Passive voice is taught to Cambodian and Thai students since in high school level. To have a good understanding about passive voice sentences, Cambodian and Thai EFL university students were instructed all types of active voice forms. Meanwhile, it has its unique and restricted characteristics, which are why it is considered as one of problems for English learners among Cambodian and Thai English as Foreign Language (EFL). The first step of most of Cambodian and Thai EFL learners, is memorizing the vocabularies and rules of English but the memorizing approach seems to be an ineffective strategy for learners, while it is very hard already for them to remember the rules and the use, they have less chance to practice in their daily life. So, it also appears that passive voice do not receive much attention among Cambodian and Thai EFL advanced learners whereas competency is often recognized as an important component of academic writing. This causes the crucial problems toward Cambodian and Thai EFL students' awareness on the importance of passive voice in their English learning.

In the same way, in the countries, passive voice seems to be a hidden subject to learners. It means that learners have less chance to learn detail and use constantly. On the other hand, teachers do not want to teach or explain to learners because of the difficulty and take much time to makethem understand. Furthermore, number of courses teaching passive voice is very less at all levels even in high school or university. Some researchers found that most of Thai EFL learners unfamiliar with passive voice and use English carelessly and it does the same to Cambodian EFL learners. Therefore, teachers draw the student's attention to passive voice or teach them at the earliest stage, if possible. These would able to motivate their learners to gradually recognize the significance of passive voice. Thus, their learners would pay more attention and use it effectively and carefully. The teachers or instructors should learn the areas of learners' weaknesses that can help them realize which forms of passive voice should be taught in order to raise students' awareness of passive voice. In addition, by analyzing what strategy to use in producing the correct passive voice, EFL teachers can adjust their teaching method easier and more effectively. Therefore, to study the errors of using passive voice will

be an important and useful tool in language teaching and acquisition because it shows up clearly what should be specifically emphasized in teaching and learning English.

It becomes the most popular grammatical point confusing for English language learners in some countries in Asia including Ahmad RifanHadi (2014, Indonesia) an error analysis of using passive voice sentences in writing made by the second year students of SMPN Tuntang, Monnipha, Somphong(2013, Thailand) an analysis of errors in passive sentence structures by Thai EFL university students, Johor Bahra (2013, Malaysia) the correct use of passive voice in report writing by Somali SPACE students in UTM, Nguyen Tuan Anh (2010, Vietnam) a contrastive analysis passive voice in English and Vietnamese, Kenichi Yamakawa (1994, Japan) error analysis of passive written by Japanese learners of English and Hakeem M Elmadwi (2007, Libya) problem encountered by students at Al-Amal secondary school in using passive voice in written English.

However, most of the previous research studies mention above, focus on one single group of EFL learners, particularly those with high proficiency. Hardly do such studies reflect a true picture of how learners' passive voice knowledge has been developed through time. To put it another way, there has been few researches to date examining learners' errors in the total interlanguage system with respect to passive voice learning especially with the university students from the two countries. Today, Cambodian and Thai EFL university students are trying to overtake their awareness on their fixed English subject in their curriculum especially for the English major students. They need to improve their ability in English, however, they may not pay attention to much about passive voice or may not worry or forget about the importance of English passive voice in academic writing pattern.

It is the reason that the present study is undertaken to bridge the gap in passive voice use between Cambodian and Thai learners of English. So far many researchers (Hadi2014, Somphong 2013, Bahra 2013, Anh 2010)have been kept on the study of teaching approach in passive voice differences between the first language and the second language but very few researches has been conducted on passive voice errors in Thai EFL learners and seem there are not any researches on passive voice errors in Cambodian EFL learners.

Thus, this study will examine their problems of producing passive voice errorsand compare the similarities and differences between the errors produced by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students. These 2 groups of students are in the same year in the university and they are considered to have similar knowledge in writing that will be a suitable comparison of the study. In addition, this study will be the first comparison between Cambodian and Thai EFL university students. The researcher hopes that the findings from this study could be a part of a proper solution for students who want to improve their English language, especially for writing aspect.

Purposes of the Study

1. To categorize types of passive voice errors in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students.

2. To find problems of passive voice errors in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students.

Methodology

1. Population and Samples

The population of this study consisted students from two universities. First group was the third year English major students from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, BuriramRajabhat University, Thailand and second group was the third year English major students from Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. They both were the students in academic year 2017.

The samples of this study included 62 students and divided into two groups. First group was 35 from third year English major students of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, BuriramRajabhat University, Thailand. The second group was 35 from the third year English major students from Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Both groups of sample were selected by purposive sampling technique.

2. Data Collection

There were two steps in collecting the data as follows:

1) Writing test- the researcher started to collect the data during the period of March-April 2017. The data was collected by the researcher himself. The researcher

collected data from the third year English major students from Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia and then continued to collect data from third year English major students in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, BuriramRajabhat University, Thailand. Both universities student were required to transform 18 active voice to passive voice sentences consisted present simple, present continuous present perfect, present perfect continuous, present perfect continuous, past simple, past continuous, past perfect, past perfect continuous, future simple, future continuous, future perfect and future perfect continuous in forms of positive, question and negative in first part and second part was paragraph writing that students were required to change sentences from active into passive voice in a paragraph under the topic of "My house". They were given 60 minutes to do the writing test. They were not allowed to use dictionary, cellphone or other electric devices to assist them in the class.

2) Interview- after writing was done, the researcher started to score students' writing test in order to find out four students from each university who get

low scores and then, the researcher began to interview those students via cellphone talk by asking some questions relevant to the passive voice.

Data analysis

There were three steps for analyzing the data in this study:

1) Scoring of tests - the researcher scored the whole of students' writing test to identify the correct or wrong sentences one by one from each group of the samples based on their answers. The researcher scored students' writing test based on Brookhart (2011):1 point: The sentence was completed. Sentence was correct by the grammatical rule. 0 point: The written sentence was not completed or is significantly lacking in grammatical rule.

2) Coding of errors -after scoring all students' writing test, the researcher coded and correct errors based on Azar Schrampfer (1985) errors in passive voice area.

3) Interpreting of interview- the researcher described information of both universities student who get low scores to find problems of passive.

Findings :

1. Types of passive voice errors in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students

Types of students' passive voice error were classified by using theory of Azar Schrampfer (1985) errors in passive voice area. The findings of passive voice errors made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students were presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Cambodian and Thai EFL university students' errors in passive voice

PassiveVoiceErrorType	Cambodian (n=32)		Thai (n=30)		AllGroup Combined	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Misformationofpassiveverb	181	27.60	406	61.89	587	89.49
2. Activeorderbutpassiveform	2	0.30	12	1.82	14	2.12
3. Absentorwrongprepositionbefore	10	1.52	22	3.35	32	4.87
4. Passiveorderbutactiveform	11	1.70	12	1.82	23	3.52
Total	204	31.12	452	68.88	656	100.00

Table 1 reveals the overall frequency of the passive voice errors found in the paragraph writing made by 32 Cambodian EFL university students and 30 Thai EFL university students. The highest number of passive voice errors found in Cambodian EFL university students' paragraph writing was misformation of passive verb (f=181), followed by passive order but active form (f=11), absent or wrong preposition before (f=10), and active order but passive form(f=2) respectively.

While the highest number of passive voice errors found in Thai EFL university students' paragraph writing was misformation of passive verb (f=406), followed by absent or wrong preposition before (f=22) and passive order but active form (f=12), and active order but passive form(f=12) respectively.

2. Problems of passive voice errors in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students

The 8 third year English major students from both universities who got low scores in their writing test were asked about problems of passive voice. After interviewing students from both universities, problems were divided into 4 main categories consisted the complication of passive voice forms, lack of students' interest, lack of teachers' attention and lack of constantly practice writing. Below were the details of problems:

First problem was the complication of passive form. Students from both universities mentioned that it was hard to make them understand because they need to remember twelve forms of active voice, twelve forms of passive voice, verb to be in kind of past, present and future, forms of regular and irregular verbs of verb participle and subject and object of sentences. Here are some problems found from students:

"I found that I forget some rules of using active voice, passive voice, verb to be, verb participle and subject and object of sentences."

"The use of passive voice forms of all tenses, the use of verb to be in form of present, past and future, subject and object of active and passive voice sentences, the use of regular and irregular verb of verb participle put me into difficulty."

"I sometime feel complicated with tenses of active when it is transformed to passive voice, the use of verb to be and verb participle."

Second problem was lack of passive voice interest. It means that they were rather not interest in using English passive voice. They said passive voice is rarely used in their daily communication that why they did not pay attention and they will learn if it is necessary. The followings are the written expression from their words:

"I do not care much because it is rarely used in my daily life, so I will learn it as much as possible that I can do."

"For me, passive voice is not much use in speaking style that why I do not pay attention."

"For my own idea, I think that passive voice is so complicated if we do not know about its forms. It is a reason that I need to learn other kinds of grammar than take much time focus only passive voice."

Third problem was lack of teachers' attention. Teachers seem do not explain much or sometime ignore for telling the advantage of passive voice in formal writing. Teacher said that passive voice is not often use in English spoken way and need to take time to illustrate to students. The following are some examples get from students' interview:

"I have studied English passive voice since I was in high school but in the past, my teacher told me to pay attention to learn other kinds of grammar which I can use it more often, for passive voice my teacher just explains me a time without going detail."

"I had short time to learn passive voice because I had two reasons, one believe my teacher not to learn much. They told me that passive voice use only in written form and hard to understand. They said, if students want to be good at passive voice, students must be clear in active voice in advance. Two, I just follow my teachers' advices so I decided to learn other skills in English."

"I did not know well about passive voice. I have learned passive voice when I was in grade 12 but my teacher took a little time to teach me and told me that we had other topics to talk and learn more."

Fourth problem was lack of constantly practice writing. They do not have enough time to learn, review and practice on passive voice exercises. Yet, they ignore, careless and took time to do other lessons. It is the reason that they get low scores in their test. Here are some expressions from students:

"I have studied passive voice since I was grade 12 but at that time I did not know clearly about it so I decided to stop learning for a while. On the other hand I had to handle my national examination. I met passive voice again when I was in first year university student but I still cannot use it well."

"For me, I can say that just only a time that I learned passive voice with my teacher and then I do not have time to review again. I used to remember all forms of passive voice but I forget all because I do not use and sometime I do not pay attention."

"I tried to spend whole day to learn passive voice but I feel confuse with its forms. I can tell you that passive voice is

complicated and make me headache so I drop it and find other easy for me to understand."

Discussion

1. Type of passive voice errors in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students

The findings revealed that types of passive voice error in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students were all of four types. This could be explained by the fact that student from both universities have difficulty in the use of passive voice when transform active into passive sentences, especially the use of verb to be, verb participle in forms of present, past and future. This phenomenon could cause from the lack of constantly use or careless in writing so their proficiency of using grammar knowledge in passive voice is still insufficient. Yet, students from both universities may have less opportunity to aware the importance of passive voice in formal writing or learning grammatical pattern. Therefore, they do not put their awareness to learn or practice in their daily

life. This is supported by Parrot (2004) who pointed out that teaching materials often concentrate on the form of standard passive construction into passive one. Learners sometime end up with the impression that passive constructions are some kind of optional, deviant version of active construction. Additionally, Ellis (1985) described that error takes places when the deviation arises as a result of the lack of knowledge and when learners fail to perform their competence. This finding is similar to Rivandil (2012) claimed that teachers were the main factor to reduce students' error by finding some effective strategies that could be employed in classroom to help students appreciate the correct usage of passive voice in writing.

2. Problems of passive voice errors in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students

The findings shown that problems of passive voice errors in English paragraph writing made by Cambodian and Thai EFL university students were from the complication of passive voice forms, lack of students' interest, lack of teachers' attention and students' study habit. It could

be illustrated that students from both universities still not understand well about passive voice. The use of English passive voice is very complicated that students need to handle other rules of English grammar such as verb to be, verb participle in forms of present, past and future and subject and object of sentences. If they could not understand the rules, they may have problems in transforming active to passive voice. Moreover, they are lack of passive voice interest which made them had a bad study habit. They thought that the rule of using English passive voice is difficult to understand and they just practice the rules and do exercise only in the classroom. Apart from that, in their everyday life, they rarely revise their lessons frequently or only one time before the examination. In addition, teachers were careless to explain the advantages or how to form of passive voice correctly in writing. They did not motivate students to use passive voice inside or outside classroom.This is supported by Parrot (2004) mentioned that because the form of passive construction is quite complex, the most students usually find the difficulties to understanding about the using of auxiliary verb be and

distinguishing the form of past participle. Moreover,Nakmontri (2009) pointed out that passive voice seldom use in daily life and they did not need to use this grammar rule in their future job so it makes them lack of motivation to study and have problems when they want to use this grammar rule. Additionally, Noisaengsri (1981) explained that the inability of students using English passive voice because of poor teaching, uncertainty about teaching methods, shortage of adequate teaching materials, lack of motivation and lack of supervision. This finding of the study is similar to Nakmontri (2009) mentioned that the problems in using passive voice of students caused by the complication of passive voice forms, lack of students' interest, lack of teachers' attention and lack of constantly practice writing.

Conclusion

To conclude, the researcher hopes that the present study can help the instructors to develop their teaching on the topic of English passive voice. Yet, the researcher believes that this study would provide proper information for readers or students who want to learn or conduct the

461

research related to English passive voice aspect.

References

1. ASEAN. (2008). **The ASEAN Charter. Indonesia, Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat**. Available online at: http://www.asean.org/archive/publi ccations/ASEANCharter. pods. Accessed: February 5, 201.

2. Azar, S.(1985). **Fundamentals of English Grammar** 2nd Edition, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

3. Brookhart, S.M. 2011. **Grading and learning: Practices that support student achievement**: Indiana University Bloomington, Bloomington, United State of America.

4. Dulay, H.C., Burt, M.K. &Krashen, S.(1982). **Language Two**.Oxford : Oxford University Press.

5. Ellis, R. (1985). **Understanding Second Language Acquisition**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

6. Hadi, A. R. A. (2014). **An Error Analysis of Using Passive Voice Sentences in Writing** Made by the Second Years Students of SMPN2 Tuntang in the Academic Year 2013/2014.English Department and Educational Faculty: State Institute Islamic Studies: Indonesia.s

7. Hakeem, M. Elmadwi. (2007). **Problem Encountered by Students at Al-Amal Secondary School in Using Passive Voice in Written English**. Lecturer in English Department, Zawia University: Libya.

8. Hall, Z. (1992). **Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing**. Michigan: Michigan press.

9. Harmer, J. (2001).**The Practice of English Language Teaching**. 3rd ed. London:Pearson Education Ltd.

10. Hedge (1988).**Writing**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

11. Parrot, M. (2004). **Grammar for English Language Teacher**: Cambridge University Press Cambridge.

12. Johor, B.(2013). **The Correct Use of Passive Voice in Report Writing by Somali SPACE Students in UTM.** Faculty of Education, University Technology Malaysia: Malaysia.

13. Nguyen,T. A. (2010). **A Contrastive Analysis Passive Voice in English**

and Vietnamese. Working Papers in Linguistics, 3(8), 103-117.

14. Noisengri,P.(1981).**Teaching English for Thai students: A transformational Approch**. Ramkhamhaeng University, Bangkok, Thailand.

15. Raimes, A.(1983). **Techniques in Teaching Writing**. London: Oxford University Press.

16. Rivandil, N. (2012). **The Correct Use of Passive Voice in Report Writing by Somali SPACE Students in UTM**: Faculty of Education, University Technology Malaysia, Malaysia.

17. Dixon,R.J (1986). **Practice Exercise in everyday English for advance foreign students**: New York. USA. Regents Publishing Company.

18. Nakmontri,S. (2009). **The problem in using passive voice made by the third year English major students at Rangsit University**:

Rangsit University, Bangkok, Thailand.

19. Shokrpour, N. & Fallahzadeh, M. (2008). **A survey of the students and interns' EFL writing problems in Shiraz University of Medical Science**: Shiraz University of Medical Science, Shiraz, Iran.

20. Somphong, M. (2013).**An Analysis of Errors in Passive Sentence Structures by Thai EFL University Students**.Department of English for International Communication, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Nakhon Si Thammarat: Thailand.

21. Yamakawa, K. (1994). **Error Analysis of Passive Sentences Written by Japanese Learners of English: With Reference to Native Language Transfer.** ARELE: Annual Review of English Language Education in Japan, 5, 101-110.