HS025

An Error Analysis of English Composition Written by Cambodia and Thai Grade twelve Students

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Abstract

The main objectives of this study were : 1) to identify types of errors in English composition written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students, and 2) to find out problems of errors in English composition written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students. The samples of this study included 70 grade twelve students and divided into two groups. First group was 35 students from Kampungcheuteal Institute of Technology Kampong Thom, Cambodia, and Second group was 35 students from Lamplaimat High School Buriram, Thailand. in academic year 2017. Both groups of sample were selected by using purposive sample technique. The instruments were writing test and interview. The data from writing test were analyzed and coded according to Dulay et al. (1982). Information from interview was analyzed by content analysis. The statistics used for analyzing from writing test were frequency and percentage.

The findings of this research were : 1) both groups made error in type of grammar in most frequently among three types. When considered by the nation, Cambodian students had priority grammar errors amount less than Thai students, and 2) three main problems in writing composition of grade twelve students from Cambodia and Thailand were from lack of grammar , lack of vocabulary and lack of constantly practice writing.

Keywords: Errors, English composition, Cambodian student, Thai students

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Introduction

Since World War II, English is playing an important role as the international foreign language widely used in education and communication all over the world, especially, in terms of business, politics, and tourism, the media, and the educational system. People around the world, in over sixty countries, use English as an official language. It has become the universal language for communication between speakers whose native languages are different from each other (Harmer. 2001). These figures make it likely that English has the largest number of non-native users of any of the world's languages. Thus, teaching and learning English become significantly important in most countries' education systems, Cambodia and Thailand are not an exception.

Although English has been included in Cambodia educational systems for many years, Cambodian students still face difficulty in the using four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, it is generally accepted that of the four skills, writing is more difficult than listening, reading, or speaking. Heaton (1975: 138) comments that writing skills are complex and difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgment elements. According to Flower and Hayes (1981), writing is a complicated recursive process instead of a linear one whereby writers are supposed to go back and forth when they compose. The writing skill difficulties are one of the most significant problems that affect not only native English speakers, but also hundreds of students that are learning English as a second or foreign language around the world.

In Thailand, English is considered as a universally used language. It also plays an important role in the Thai education system. With regard to Thai education, English language is promoted and is a required subject in all levels: primary, secondary, and university. The Ministry of Education has revised and improved the English curriculum which has been constructed to help people to use English to communicate with others and to keep up with a changing world. The main objectives of the English curriculum are to improve Thai students' ability to be able to use English to communicate

correctly and appropriately and to introduce Thai culture to people of other countries. Cambodia and Thailand there are great similarity in terms of the English language teaching situation and learning environments. In this regard, the two countries share a number of common problems such as the emphasis on the Grammar-Translation method and the neglect of writing skills in English language teaching. Writing well in English is a difficult prospect for Cambodia and Thailand students. Students often fear writing because they fear making mistakes. For the academic English program, English courses are required from the elementary level of grades 1-6. Nevertheless, it is found that the students cannot communicate in English even though they have been taking English course for many years. This failure in studying English can be experienced by teachers as well as students. Between the two parties, however, this research chose to focus on grade twelve students of Kampungcheuteal Institute of Technology Kampong Thom, Cambodia, and grade twelve students of Lamplaimat High School Buriram, Thailand, who is going to be university students. This is because it is

assumed that students must have extensive knowledge and high capability to prepare themselves for university entrance exams. One of the best measurements for students competence is a "writing test" since the result can show true ability from every angle. For the reasons, the researcher choose to analyze "writing composition errors" of grade twelve students of Kampungcheuteal Institute of Technology Kampong Thom, Cambodia, and grade twelve students of Lamplaimat High School Buriram, Thailand. The results would be used as feedback to improve students' skill in writing in order to produce a good piece of writing.

Purposes:

1. To identify types of errors in English composition written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students.

2. To find out problems of errors in English composition written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students.

Methodology:

Population and Samples

The population of this research were from two high schools. First group

comprised 4 classes of 150 grade 12 students who were studying the Fundamental English Course in first semester of academic year 2017 at Kampongchheuteal Institute of Technology, Cambodia. Second group comprised 13 classes of 450 grade 12 students who were studying the Fundamental Writing Course (E33211) in first semester of academic year 2017 at Lamplaimat School, Thailand.

The samples of this study included 70 and divided into two groups. First group was 35 students from Kampungcheuteal Institute of Technology, Kampong Thom, Cambodia. They were selected by purposive sampling technique; because they had studied entitle "English for Cambodia" which they are required to learn kinds of writing. Second group was 35studnets from Lamplaimat High School, Buriram, Thailand. They were chosen by purposive sampling technique; because of all of them study have learned course entitle "Reading Adventure with Writing".

Data Collection:

There were steps in collecting the data as follows:

1. The researcher collected the data by writing test during the period of April-May 2017 from grade twelve students of Lamplaimat High School, Buriram, Thailand and grade twelve students of Kampungcheuteal Institute of Technology Kampong Thom, Cambodia. The data was collected by the researcher himself. The researcher required students from each school to do the writing test within 60 minutes. The students asked to write a composition based on one of five topics of "Taking care of a pet", "Activities on a long weekend", "If I were a millionaire", "My childhood", "My family". 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 scored in students' writing test in order to find out four students from each school who got low scores in writing test and got GPA over 3.5 to do interview by cell phone talk to identify their problems in writing aspects. The interviewees from each school were divided in two groups: first group selected four students who get GPA over 3.5 and second

group selected four students who got low score in their writing test.

Data analysis:

The collected data were analyzed and categorized using the data analysis described below:

1. Coding of Errors:

1.1 The researcher checked all sample compositions to find errors and mark all of the errors found in each sample paper. For analyzing errors in the obtain data, the researcher exploited the scheme of error classification which is adapted from that of such researchers as Dulay et al. (1982).

1.2 After checking errors in all sample compositions, the researcher typed the types of errors and types the correct sentences under the wrong ones in order to use them as the data for categorizing the types of errors. The researcher coded the errors of compositions of each student one by one.

1.3 After checking and correcting errors were complete, the checked errors are firstly examined by the research advisor. After that, the researcher recruited two experts of the English

language to check the types of errors and the correct sentence base on the researcher coding.

1.4 When the experts finished checking the errors code by the researcher, the researcher got recommendations from the experts and got the data to improve following the recommendations.

2. Categorization of Errors:

2.1 After checking the types of errors and type the wrong sentences and the correct sentences, the researcher categorized the errors find into three main categories and their sub types.

2.2 When all types of errors were code, the researcher studied each student's error type and specify the code for each type of error. Then, the researchers counted the number of errors and recorded into the errors recording form. Then, the researcher firstly let two thesis advisors examine more errors.

Findings:

1. Types of errors found in English compositions written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students

To have the overall view about the errors of the English compositions, the

researcher summarized the types of errors and the number of errors by arranging them in order and classifying them into 3 main categories: grammatical errors, syntactic errors, and lexical errors based on the scheme of error classification which was adapted from Dulay et al. (1982). Table 1 presented the types and number of errors of all three categories of errors the students made in their writings.

The three categories of errors found in English compositions written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students were presented as follows:

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Overall Categories of Errors Found in English Compositions

Error Types	Cambodian (n=35)		Thai (n=35)		All Group Combined	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Grammatical errors	1301	33.09	1758	44.71	3059	77.8
2. Lexical errors	132	3.35	156	3.98	288	7.33
3. Syntactic errors	264	6.71	321	8.16	585	14.87
Total	1697	43.15	2235	56.85	3932	100

As shown in Table 1, it reveals that there were three categories of errors that the Cambodian and Thai students made in their English compositions with the total number of all errors of 3932. The most frequently of grammatical errors were found in Cambodian students' English composition (f=1301, 33.09%), followed by lexical errors (f=132, 3.35) and syntactic errors (f=246, 6.71%) respectively. At the same time as, the most frequently of grammatical errors were found in Thai students' English composition (f=1,758, 44.71%), followed by lexical errors (f=156, 3.98) and syntactic errors (f=231, 8.16%) respectively.

2. Problems of errors in English composition written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students

The 8 Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students who got low scores in their

writing test and got GPA over 3.5 were asked about the problems in writing composition. After interviewing, found that they lack of grammatical, lack of vocabulary's knowledge and lack of constantly practice writing. Below were the details of problems: First problem was grammatical role put them in difficulty. They could not use accurately grammar in sentences such as noun, verb, conjunction, preposition and tens of sentences. Here are some examples of their problems:

"I think that grammatical roles are very hard for me because I cannot create sentences, I forgot some rules of how to use noun, verb or tense. It is very hard for me to write English composition."

"It is very difficult for me to write composition because I do not know how to construct the sentence in present, past and future and choose verb to use in the sentences."

"I do not think that I can do your writing composition test well because of the grammar. I try to remember forms of sentence that I want to write but I cannot order of these words."

Second problem was lack of vocabulary. It was one of problems that

they face when they write composition because beside grammatical roles, vocabulary was importance to makes sentences meaningful and readable.

"I think I cannot use more academic vocabulary in writing composition. I just use basic or easy words that I can remember. So, my writing composition is quite bad."

"My vocabulary in this writing composition is still low. Sometime I cannot spell new vocabulary that I just learn. I cannot use formal vocabulary in my writing.

"I cannot remember new vocabulary. My sentences are not in good order because my vocabulary. It is so hard for me to make my writing composition is good and correctly."

Third problem was lack of constantly practice writing.. They do not try to study new vocabulary and use it in short sentences. They do not want to write composition and they do not like learning grammar because of the complication to understand. They seem do other skills that easy for them. Here are some expressions of students from the interview:

"I seldom practice to write a composition because I need to think about

sentences that I want to use in composition. I must use correctly grammatical role so, it is hard for me."

"For me, I can say that I never practice to write the composition because I do not have much time to do it. I have homework and it is hard for me too."

"I tried to spend whole day to write a short composition with a topic but It is complicated for me to write".

According to their answers from interview, it can be summarized that problems in writing composition of grade 12 students from Cambodia and Thailand were from lack of grammar, lack vocabulary knowledge and was lack of constantly practice writing.

Discussion and Conclusion:

1. Types of errors found in English compositions written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students

The findings revealed that types of errors found in English compositions written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students, the researcher exploited the scheme of error classification which was adapted from Dulay et al. (1982). The errors

made by the subjects were indentified into various types. Then all errors were grouped into three main categories: 1) grammatical error; 2) syntactic errors; and 3) lexical errors. The findings of this study were described as follows:

The results of error analysis revealed that the students made the errors in three main categories. It was found that grammatical errors occurred most frequently, followed by lexical errors and syntactic errors, respectively. Grammatical errors were found most frequently among the three categories as mentioned above. The grammatical errors found were grouped into four main types. The most frequently found errors were parts of speech, followed by the use of tenses, mechanics, and miscellaneous errors. This could be described that Cambodian and Thai students there were the major source of problems in writing English is clearly from grammatical. Lexical errors were the second highest among the three categories. Three types of lexical errors were found in this study. The most frequently found errors were spelling, followed by literal translation from Thai (L1) into English (L2), Khmer (L1) into English (L2) and errors in word choices,

respectively. This finding similar to Widdowson (1990: 95) who presented grammar as a device for mediating between words and contexts and its functional depends upon its being subservient to lexis therefore, a more natural and effective approach in teaching of grammar should begin with lexical items and show how they need to be grammatically modified to be communicatively effective. Syntactic errors were the third highest among the three categories. There were nine sub-types of syntactic errors found in this study. The first three sub-types that occurred most frequently were the use of incomplete sentence structures, followed by redundancy, word order, the use of 'there' structure, and the use of voices, respectively. However, as for the intermediate students, it was found that syntactic errors were the most commonly found besides the grammatical errors. These results were similar to those in the study conducted by Khaourai (2002).

2. Problems of errors in English composition written by Cambodian and Thai grade twelve students.

According to information from the interview both group of participations who got low scores in their writing test and got GPA over 3.5 were asked about the problems in writing composition, the result revealed that Cambodian and Thai students had background of studying English was not too different. Problems of writing composition based on grammatical role, vocabulary and students' study habit.

Learners have a number of problems in their attempts to write in the second language "As verbs take different forms depending on tense and subjects they are used with, they create problems for second language writing students". Similarly, Kharma (1987) stated that students have problems with subject verb agreements, pronoun references, and connectors

Most of students often have mistakes about grammar when writing a passage. Kharma (1987) stated that students have problems with subject verb agreements, pronoun references, and connectors. This clearly expressed in the analysis on the students' writing papers above. Grammar limitation also affects the ability of using language in most of the students.

Out of this, vocabularies were also found in their writing problem.

Vocabulary was the backbone of learning any language; it played a key role in students' performance in both written and oral communication. Many students had limited vocabulary. Therefore they were not fluent in writing; the researcher concludes that lack of vocabulary is the biggest problem that most students usually have in writing skill. This affects students' study result and generates many difficulties in writing skill.

Lastly, lack of constantly practiced writing activities that was the reason why they cannot organize their ideas because they did not know what to write about and may lead to weakness in the writing skill as a result a lot of errors in students essays will occur. According to Davies (1998:25) "writing is essentially a creative process and good writers must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience. This takes a lot of practice. In addition, Hedge (1988:11) states that "my own experience tells me that in order to become a good writer; a student needs to write a lot". The result of this study similar to Nukit (2007) an error analysis of free English compositions written by students at Three Proficiency Levels. Master of Arts Thesis in English, Graduate School, Kasetsart University.

Conclusion:

This present can also illustrate what problems the learner is having. As a major result of this study regarding the errors, it was found that grammatical errors were most frequently occurred in English compositions. This result showed that grammar usage was necessary and important to help students to improve their writing skill.. However, the results of this study could be advantageous for not only for teachers at Kampongchheuteal Institute of Technology and Lamplaimat School, but also for those teaching at other school or educational institutions who can utilize these results when developing their curricula in order to improve students' skill in writing in order to produce a good piece of writing.

The result from the interviewing revealed that Cambodian and Thai students had background of studying English was not too different. Problems of writing composition based on lack of grammatical, lack of vocabulary knowledge and lack of constantly practice writing. Therefore, the

result could help teachers to be aware of problems in writing and the teachers can begin to build up a profile of individuals' problems and may identify learning items and problems, which may require special attention and extra practice.

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