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A study of L1 Interference in Paragraph Writing of Grade 12 Students of Bunluawittayanusorn School

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze and describe features of L1 interference in paragraph writing by 17 grade12 students of Bunluawittayanusorn School. Two levels of L1 interference, namely words and sentences were analyzed from samples of the students' paragraph writing. It was found that literal translation of Thai words into English mainly represented features of L1 lexical interference in the students' written English. Moreover, structural borrowing from Thai language such as word order, Subject-verb agreement, and noun determiners indicated features of L1 syntactic interference. These chronic writing problems should be solved in an appropriate way for the quality of written product of ESL/EFL paragraph writing.

Introduction

In facilitating ESL/EFL students to produce effective paragraph writing, many teachers prioritize students' writing problems in syntax, lexis and discourse aspects. However, many teachers neglect the problem of students' native language and culture interfering in writing English. Even though L1 interference is not a new trend in studies on second language acquisition, it is an important factor to be considered in ESL/EFL writing instruction. L1 interference with regard to the terms 'cross-linguistic and language transfer' refers to the influence of native language structures on students' performance and development in the target language (Hashim, 199). When students write in the target language, some of the characteristics show up in their writing. This issue should be considered in teaching of ESL/EFL writing. ESL/EFL students may produce pieces of writing containing correct grammar structures as well as appropriate vocabulary items and content. Nevertheless, many sentences make more sense in the students' native language than in English due to direct translation from L1 into English. If this issue is pinpointed, students will be able to work towards correcting such a problem by thinking in English or being effectively aware of a pitfall while writing in relation to the standard English writing system.

However, thinking in English when writing in English is very difficult for Thai students. Their Thai language structures and culture inevitably interfere with their written English. Although English is a compulsory subject for Thai in English. English is not used as the instructional medium in other subjects in Thai educational institutions. That is to say, typical Thai students use more Thai than English in the English language classroom. Furthermore, they rarely communicate in English with foreigners outside the classroom. When producing written English, they still have the cognitive process in Thai. They also carry over the habits of Thai language into English, such as the habit of Thai forms, meaning and culture, into English sentences. As a result, L1 interference occurs widely in their written English. The interference of Thia linguistic elements in students' written English arises in three aspects: grammatical structures, vocabulary items and discourse, First of all, Thai does not have tenses, so this feature of Thai sentences interferes in student-produced English sentences, for example ' I go to Singapore last month' Moreover, Thai has no 'articles', so Thai students often neglect them, for example, 'The Royal Princess hotel is comfortable and beautiful hotel in Nakhon Ratchasima'. In terms of vocabulary use, the different use of Thai and English words may affect Thai students' written' written English. For instance, Thai students usually write 'The price is cheap' instead of 'The price is low'. This is because Thai people use the word 'cheap' rather than 'how' in spoken and written communication (Achara Pengpanich,2002).

At the discourse level, Thai students' written English shows more repetitions, extensive use of lists, no use of conclusions, more impersonal styles, especially through lack of speculation and future-oriented conclusions. This may be caused by the absence of counterfactual statements in Thai writing (Grabe and Kaplan,1996). In this paper the researcher existential mother tongue influence on grade12 students' written English. It is found that their written products were influenced by Thai grammatical structures, vocabulary use and discourse. In terms of 'there is (are). In Thai, The two English forms, existential 'there'

and the lexical 'have', were expressed by a single form /mi:/ thus resulting in much confusion, for example, "My family has three people" or "There has many trees in my house". In terms of L1 lexical interference, their written English shows misuse of Thai words in English. The word 'beautiful woman' was used instead of beautiful woman due to the students' direct translation of the Thai word into English. In terms of L1 discourse, it influenced the ellipsis 'Last week I went to sister's house' shows that in Thai written discourse the possessive pronoun 'my' can be elliptical because context tells the interlocutor that "sister's" refers to the sister of the speaker 'I'. However, the researcher intends to study only syntactic and lexical features of L1 interference in these gradel12 students' paragraph writing. It doesn't include discourse features.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The literature review in this study points out two languages concerning L1 interference: approaches used in studies on L1 interference and studies on L1 interference in Thai and other ESL/EFL students' written English.

Approaches used in studies on L1 interference

In this study, four approaches relating to L1 interference are described: contrastive analysis, error analysis, analysis of interlanguage, and contrastive rhetoric.

Contrastive Analysis (CA) is the primary approach used to study L1 interference. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), CA focuses on the comparison of the linguistic systems of the two languages, especially the sound and grammar systems of L1 and L2, to find solutions to second language instruction problems. CA was developed and practiced in the 1950s and 1960s as an application of structural linguistics to language

Teaching. It is based on the following assumptions: (i) the main difficulties in learning a new language are caused by interference from the first language of 'language transfer' , (ii) such difficulties can be identified by contrastive analysis, and (iii) teaching materials can make use of contrastive analysis to eliminate the interference effects. Contrastive Analysis emphasizes the native language as the main factor affecting second language learners' errors. In the 1960s, Error Analysis (EA), developed and was offered

As an alternative to contrastive Analysis. It suggests that the influence of the native language on second language is more complex: second language learners' errors are caused by many complex factors affecting the learning process such as the target language itself, the communicative strategies used as well as the type and quality of second language instruction (Hashim,1999). Hence, different types of error are classified by Richards and Schmidt (2002) for an analysis as follows: (i) overgeneralizations are errors caused by extension of target language rules to inappropriate contexts, (ii) simplifications are errors resulting from learners producing simpler linguistic rules than those found in the target language, (iii) developmental errors reflect natural stages of development, (iv) communication based errors result from the use of communication strategies, (v) induced errors result from transfer of training, (vi)

voidance is caused by failure to use target language structures of since they are thought to be too difficult, and (vii) overproduction errors are structures being used too frequently.

By the late 1970s, error analysis had largely been superseded by studies of interlanguage and second language acquisition. Interlanguage is the type of language produced by second or foreign language instruction. Contrastive analysis goes on negative effects of the native language on the second language. Though error and interlanguage analysis goes beyond the native language as the vital cause of errors, the native language is still considered a negative influence by many previous researchers. By the late 1960s, Krashen's monitor model (1977) suggested that the native language does not necessarily have a negative effect on second language influence. This model moves the study of language transfer and errors or 'deviation' to 'the positive transfer'. It looks at the similarities of the native and second language features and the extent of the native language support to learning second language. This leads to the study of 'Contrastive Rhetoric' in the 1990s as "a means of enhancing the awareness of the background and culture of the native language and its effects on the native language writing produced" (Hashim, 1999).

Contrastive Rhetoric (CR)was developed to improve research in second language acquisition in which 'contrastive analysis' and 'error analysis' were used to study the first language influence on second language composition. CR does not point out 'grammatical structure' as in CA and EA. Instead, it moves to compare 'discourse structures across cultures and genres' as found in Kaplan's pioneering study (1966). This study analyzed the organization of paragraph in ESL student essays. It identified five types of paragraph development that were influenced by the students' L1 rhetorical patterns (Connor, 1999). Though contrastive rhetoric was developed more than thirty years ago, it is still important in the teaching of modern compositive due to many research studies conducted in connection with it.

Hence, the concept of CR is the study of similarities and differences between writing in first and second language in order to understand how writing conventions in one language influence how a person writes in another. Writing in a second language is thought to be influenced by the writer's L1 linguistic and cultural conventions, written discourse structure as well as present, the study of contrastive rhetoric relativity, rhetoric, text linguistic, discourse types and genres, literacy, and translation (Connor, 1999). In this research, the study of CR in relation to theories of applied linguistics is used, especially regarding first language patterns transferred to second language writing Overall a combination of contrastive analysis, error analysis and interlanguage analysis approaches was used in this study. It tries to identify patterns of L1 interference at the lexical and sentential levels of the students' written English. Meanwhile, the contrastive rhetoric approach is applied to investigate how the Thai rhetorical, stylistic and cultural patterns of writing influence the paragraph organization and written discourse in English created by the Thai students.

Studies on L1 interference in Thai and other ESL/EFL students' written English

Studies on L1 interference in written English by Thai and other ESL/EFL students are divided into three categories: L1 lexical, syntactic and discourse interference. They are discussed as follows:

L1 Lexical Interference

The influence of first language lexicons in written English is discussed via four studies. First, Tipa Thep-Ackrapong (2005) states that Thai students violate some collocation restrictions when writing in English. For instance, 'My hair is busy. (My hair is messy.), I play a computer. (I work on a computer.) and I closed (opened) the radio. (I turned off on the radio.)' are examples of using Thai collocations in written expression in English. This is also caused by the direct translation of Thai words into English. Similarly, Nattama Pongpairoj (2002) investigates lexical errors in paragraphs written by 100 first-year Arts Faculty students at Chulalongkorn University. The Thai preposition 'on' is used in English sentences such as ' There are birds on the sky.' (There are birds in the sky.) and 'the boy is sleeping on the bed.' (The boy is sleeping in the bed.) The Thai number in plural words is also used in English sentences such as 'She has black hairs.' and 'The room was full furniture's.' The word 'hair' in Thai is a countable noun but in English it is a non-countable noun, and the word 'furniture' in Thai is a countable (each piece) noun while in English it is a mass noun.

These show that the students fail to acquire competence in the lexicon of the English language. An in Nattama Pongpairoj (2002), Pintip Tuaychareon (2003) claims that the restrictions at the semantic level of the Thai language result in the limited semantic competence of English words for Thai students. For instance, the word 'bag' (Krapao in Thai) is used by Thai students for many kinds of bags in written English such as 'a hand bag, briefcase or suitcase'. This is because in Thai, for this one lexical item, the generalmeaning form can be used colloquially to convey several specific meanings. In Thai the word 'Krapao' can be used for all contexts, so Thai students use the same word 'bag' for all contexts in English. This interferes in Thai students' written English. Like Thai students, 33 first-year ESL Malay students at the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, Malayasia, face problems in L1 lexical interference when writing descriptive essays in English.

This interference occurs at two levels. First, a literal word translation is found as in the sentence 'If I don't, the senior will hot and angry'. The word 'hot' is a literal translation of the Malay word "Panas' (hati panas), which means 'angry', and was used inappropriately. Second, Malay words and phrases are used in English sentences such as 'We had orientasi week' (orientation), and 'We have many traditional games such as wau (kite) gasing (top)…. (Hashim, 1999). This L1 lexical interference is caused by the students' thought patterns in Malay when writing in English. Hence, the problems of L1 lexical interference in written English for Thai students concern collocation, plural words and general-meaning words but for Malay students literal word translation is involved.

L1 syntactic interference

The L1 syntactic interference concern errors in grammar points as found in many studies. Tipa Thep-ackrapong (2005) discusses grammar errors in subject-verb agreement and passive voice. Subject-verb agreement is difficult for Thai students due to lack of obvious sentence boundaries. The Thai language can go from one sentence to another. The subject of a sentence can be omitted if the addresser and addressee are known. The verb or adjective is in the middle of a sentence. Hence, Thai sentential characteristics may hinder students from developing a good English sentence. As a result, Thai students often write English sentences without their subjects such as 'In Hatyai ^ have many cars.' And 'Pahurad was crowed and ^ bad temperature and it smelled bad'. Passive voice in English is characterized by its syntactic structure, by the verb 'be' and 'past participle' such as 'The room is cleaned everyday'. However, passive voice in Thai can be interpreted by its contextual cluse such as 'Pad Thai, put egg and lunch box.' As a result, Thai students produce this error in their English sentences such as 'She was continuously taken the photos'.

In the study by Nattama Pongpairoj (2002) there appear to be three aspects of L1 syntactic interference in written English by Chulalongkorn University students: sentence construction, sentence boundaries, and word structures in sentences. First, the students make errors in complex sentence construction (the use of relative clause) and expletive construction (the structure of 'there+verb be') in English is equivalent in meaning to the Thai structure 'mi: + noun'). Furthermore, Thai grammar interference in written English appears in run-on sentences, sentence fragmentation, word order as well as demonstrative and indefinite determiners. Moreover, it is found that English word structures in written English influenced by Thai word structures appear in derivational and inflectional suffixes (using an) incorrect suffix, omitting grammatical morphemes, double marking and regularizing) as well as propositional morphemes.

These three aspects of L1 grammar interference are inevitably caused by direct translation from Thai a factor in L1 syntactic interference, are found in the study by Wannakarn LiKitrattanaporn (2001) about grammatical errors from written English paragraphs and essays by third-year students majoring in accounting and marketing at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Srinakarinwirot University, Bangkok. She repots that the majority of written work is full of direct translation from Thai into English sentences, such as 'Plan of my future will volunteer for the social example of warrior's die the war.' And 'I made the English homework'. This factor also results in other grammar points such using Thai nouns (We ate Chicken fried.) and the ellipsis of English articles, which are not found in Thai (I want to buy car.) Similar to Thai students, ESL Hong Kong Baptist University students performed written English assignments which were influenced by their L1 grammar structures. Examples of this cross-linguistic influence are showed as follows:

Subject-verb agreement: The pigment of eyes which control the light.

This is caused by the difficulty in identifying the head of a complex NP (noun phrase) subject (which is always final and easily identifiable in Chinese, but in English), which controls agreement.

Auxiliaries; I am agree with you. (I do agree with you.)

There is a lack of 'primary auxiliaries' in Chinese.

Noun: The structure of noun phrases in English is too complex for Chinese students. In Chinese, the noun phrase is relatively simple, with the noun head always occurring at the end and thus easily identifiable.

Determiners: His father took ^ bath twice a day. (this is because of a lack of articles in Chinese.)

Clause / sentence structure, especially for pre predicators: Kavin ^ afraid to say that… In Chinese, both verbs and adjectives can be the predicator (head of the predicator), but in English only verbs can (Hung,2000)

From the studies, L1 syntactic interference in written English by Thai students is found in common grammar errors, especially regarding subject-verb agreement, verb-tense, passive voice, relative clauses, expletive structure (there is / are) and word order. Meanwhile, interference in written English by Hong Kong students is in regard to tense, articles and auxiliary verbs.

L1 discourse interference

The L1 discourse interference is described via many studies. Mc Daniel (1994) discusses the concept of Thai essays used as a model by Thai student writers of English. This results in annoyance discourse for English language readers and in emergence of L1 discourse interference, ad consists of two levels: sentence and paragraph. At the sentence level, Thai student writers may directly translate sentences of Thai-style structures into English. Thai essays contain a different sentence structure from that of English. It is sometimes hard to identify where one sentence ends and the next starts. There are no punctuation marks such as question mark or exclamation mark unless these English punctuation marks are borrowed in Thai essays. Moreover, in Thai sentence, the subject can be omitted, but in English sentence, there must be an identifiable subject. Without a subject or with a vague subject in English essays, non-Thai readers may be confused. At the paragraph level, Mc Daniel (1994) states that English essays point out a proper paragraph. However, many Thai student writers do not use paragraphs at all. This may confuse non-Thai readers for lack of pause to think about the writing. Scarcity of paragraphing means that the idea in an essay is not divided into paragraphs. It would be very difficult for to understand the write's idea and organization. If Thai student writers use 'paragraphing' they often sue it wrongly. In other words, they may make paragraphs break in the middle of an idea or they do not start a new paragraph when a new idea is begun.

Tipa Thep-s Ackrapong (2005) concurs with McDaniel (1994) that many Thai writers struggle to convey clear thesis statements or topic sentences at the beginning of their

paragraphs. Instead, they often begin their English essays with a rhetorical question, subsequently answering it later in the text. This style results in readers only understanding the main point at the end of the essay. Such challenges arise from Thai writers' limited awareness of the differences between Thai and English rhetorical structures. Similarly, in an analysis of the written English of 60 ESL Chinese Singaporean Grade 9 students, Fagan and Cheong (1987) found that Chinese rhetorical styles significantly influenced their compositions. Specifically, 60.8% of the students' essays did not follow the English three-part structure of "Introduction-Body-Conclusion." Instead, 50.6% adhered to the Chinese four-part composition style of "Introduction-Body-Related or Contrasting Sub-theme-Conclusion." Furthermore, 71.4% of the essays demonstrated characteristics of Chinese literary traditions, such as digression, repetition, and indirection. Additionally, 53.8% of the compositions featured "flowery, florid, exaggerated, and metaphorical" elements, further reflecting the influence of Chinese rhetorical styles.

In English essays, the three-part pattern of "Introduction-Body-Conclusion" relies heavily on coherence to provide readers with clear landmarks. Transition statements are critical for signaling topic shifts and ensuring unity throughout the essay. However, Japanese students' written English often lacks such transitional markers. French (2005) explains that written Japanese typically leaves it to the readers to determine the relationships between parts of an essay and the essay as a whole. Based on these findings, Thai discourse influences on written English are evident in the omission of sentence subjects, the absence of clear topic sentences, and inadequate paragraphing. Similarly, foreign language discourse influences, such as the four-part Chinese composition structure and the lack of transition statements in Japanese writing, also affect students' written English.

Research Objectives

The research objective is to analyze and describe L1 interference in the grade12 students of Bunluawittayanusorn School.

Research Question

What are the most common errors that students make in their paragraph writing? This question aims to explore specific patterns of rhetorical and structural errors influenced by native discourse styles in students' English compositions. It addresses how cultural and linguistic backgrounds shape paragraph writing and identifies areas for improvement in teaching effective English writing skills.

Research Methodology

Research Population and Sampling

The research population comprised 17 Grade 12 students selected as the research subjects. These students were from the same class and shared similar demographic characteristics, ranging from 17 to 18 years. All participants had been studying English as a foreign language for over six years, beginning their English education in primary school. The sample included a mix of genders, with 5 male and 12 female students, reflecting the gender distribution within the class. The selection of this specific group ensured homogeneity in age, academic background, and exposure to English language learning, providing a consistent foundation for examining the research objectives. This sampling approach, which focuses on a single class, was intended to minimize variability caused by differing educational contexts or age groups, thereby enhancing the reliability of the study's findings.

Research instruments

The research instruments include 2 issues: The samples of the students' paragraph writing, and The Analytical Marking Method

1. The samples of the students' paragraph writing were the main source of date used for the analysis of L1 interference. They were taken from 17 grade 12 students of the selected school. The topic provided is "An Unidentified Object". The students writing a paragraph as outlined by using the model they had learned. The students' writing performance of the whole paragraph was used for data analysis for this study.

2. The Analytical Marking Method

The students' paragraph writing was scored using the 'Analytical Marking Method' (Appendix2). This scoring method is used as a research instrument because it provides the students with feedback on the effective development of their writing skills. The students' total scores were achieved by the sub-scores on component skills. In this study, the component skills or scoring criteria were content, vocabulary, grammar, organization, and mechanics. They were adapted from the ESL Composition Profile (Astika, 1993) to cover features of a composition containing 'content, logical development of ideas, language use, grammar, vocabulary, and style'.

Data collection

The samples of paragraph writing were collected from 17 students. The students were provided with the topic 'An Unidentified Object' (see Appendix 1 for a sample text.) and were asked to write on it in detail. They were also given sufficient time to write (Ellis 1997) and were allowed to consult a dictionary if required.

Data analysis

The samples of the 17 students' paragraph writing were analysis in the aspect of L1 syntactic interference focused on the extent of Thai grammatical points at word, phrase, clause and sentence levels influencing the students' English sentences. Moreover, the analysis of L1

lexical interference emphasized the semantic system of Thai lexis affecting the students' English word choice. Overall, the data analyzed was interpreted in consideration of the L1 interference theory in relation to the four approaches used: Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis, interlanguage Analysis, and Contrastive Rhetoric in order to identify problems of interference and to discuss how Thai language transfer and cultural knowledge influence the students' written English.

Research Results

It was found that 6 categories of grammar errors represented the L1 interference in the students' written English: word order of Thai structure, tense, subject verb agreement the infinitive, prepositions, and determiners.

Word order of Thai structure

Some main points of sentences with word of Thai structure are discussed as follows:

The Thai structure has 'head noun + modifier' While the English structure contains 'modifier +head noun' Thai students misused the English structure of modification due to the influence of the Thai structure of modification. From the sentence, "I saw an object strange….." showed that this sentence was constructed by the interference of the Thai modification structure above. Both in Thai and English, the adjective form of 'strange' modifies the head noun 'object'. However, in Thai it is positional after the head noun while in English it is positioned before the head noun. The difference between the modification structures of the two languages can confuse the students.

The use of commas in Thai sentences is not found such as from the sentences, "While I was sitting in front of my home I saw strange object in the sky" and "A few minutes later. That flying object flew very fast away" showed that when producing written English, this interference is also occurring. The students did not use the comma to link the clauses.

Subject-verb agreement and tense

The agreement of the subject and verb in relation to the tenses containing many sentences is not found in Thai structure such as "One of the most exciting things in my life happen in the dark night" and "One of the most exciting things in my life take place in a dark night". In Thai, verbs do not change when the suffixes 's', 'es', 'ed' and 'd' or other forms of the present and past participle verbs are added according to singular or plural nouns. Furthermore, the time and tense in English and Thai do not come along together. The sentence "When I'm sitting in front of my home, I saw strange object in the sky" showed that the student used the present continuous tense in a past continuous sentence. In Thai, tense and time do not result in the transformation of verbs. However, the time and tense in English result in the change of verbs forms.

The use of some suffixes like "ing" and past tense forms showed that students were aware of the rules on different tense application and they have already hypothesized that these verbs needed to be used with different tense forms are not written in the basic form of

the verb. For example, the sentence "While I sitting in front of my home……" showed that they acknowledged the "ing" form but they were not sure of the complete past continuous tense forms and application in the English sentence.

The infinitive and gerund

Concerning errors on the infinitive structure such as "I was surprised to saw the light from this object and "I was too frightened to say or asked the question" the students were more familiar with the infinitive 'without to' in Thai than in English and the sentence "I am surprised to see the light come out……" showed that the students misused of gerund. Using gerund was very difficult for Thai students because of its absence in Thai structure.

Prepositions

The sentences "I am interested about Unidentified Flying Object very much" and "I'm interested Unidentified Flying Object very much" indicate that the students' sue of Thai preposition to express English sentences. In Thai, we don't have a collocation word like interested in so students misused with this kind of swords.

Noun determiners

The sentences "Those strange object……" and "It was – very bright light" showed that students created errors in the article "a" and used the plural definite determiner "those" with a singular noun "object".

It was normal for the students to be confused with the use of these English articles because of their absence in Thai structure.

Words Choice

The students lack appropriate vocabulary. They used the word 'right' instead of 'light' and "to" instead of "too" in sentences "I was surprised at the right come out from the flying object" and "I was to frightened to talk or….." These showed that students didn't know the real meaning of the words the used. Moreover, they used the word "late" instead of "later" in the sentence "A few minutes late, those object fly away quickly' showed that students didn't aware of the suffix "er" in English because there isn't this kind of characteristics in Thai.

Singular and Plural Form

The students did not know that the plural form using the suffix 's' must be applied to the countable plural noun. A possible reason for the failure to construct plural noun forms probably because in Thai, there is no plural marker for a noun so they used the words "A few minute later" instead of "A few minutes later."

The research findings revealed that the students' written English was significantly influenced by the interference of their L1 (Thai) grammatical structures. Six main categories of grammar errors were identified. Word Order of Thai Structure finds as Thai students mistakenly applied the Thai word order (head noun + modifier) to English, resulting in errors such as placing adjectives after nouns. And commas, often absent in Thai writing, were omitted in

English sentences, leading to improperly linked clauses. Subject-Verb Agreement and Tense finds as Errors occurred due to the lack of subject-verb agreement and incorrect tense usage, as verbs in Thai do not conjugate based on subject or tense. And students showed partial understanding of tense rules but struggled with proper application, particularly in past continuous and other complex forms. Infinitive and Gerund finds as misuse of infinitive forms and gerunds was common, reflecting the absence of such grammatical constructs in Thai. And errors included overuse of infinitives and confusion between infinitive and gerund usage. Prepositions as prepositional errors arose from direct translation of Thai prepositional use, which lacks collocation equivalents like "interested in." Noun Determiners finds as Students frequently misused articles and determiners due to their absence in the Thai language. And singular and plural inconsistencies were observed, such as using plural determiners with singular nouns. Word Choice and Singular/Plural Form finds as students exhibited limited vocabulary knowledge, leading to incorrect word usage, such as "right" instead of "light" and "late" instead of "later." And errors in pluralization stemmed from the absence of plural markers in Thai, such as failing to add “s” to countable plural nouns.

These findings underscore the importance of addressing L1 interference in English language instruction for Thai students. Tailored teaching strategies focusing on grammar, syntax, and vocabulary development can help mitigate these challenges and improve students’ written English proficiency.

Conclusion

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Subject-Verb Agreement and Tense finds Errors occurred due to the lack of subject-verb agreement and incorrect tense usage, as verbs in Thai do not conjugate based on subject or tense. Students showed partial understanding of tense rules but struggled with proper application, particularly in past continuous and other complex forms.

Infinitive and Gerund finds Misuse of infinitive forms and gerunds was common, reflecting the absence of such grammatical constructs in Thai. Errors included overuse of infinitives and confusion between infinitive and gerund usage.

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These findings underscore the importance of addressing L1 interference in English language instruction for Thai students. Tailored teaching strategies focusing on grammar, syntax, and vocabulary development can help mitigate these challenges and improve students’ written English proficiency.

In this study, the two levels of L1 interference represent more negative transfer than positive transfer in the students’ written English. The errors which students committed were basically grammatical. The students also had a relatively weak vocabulary and their sentences were sometimes incomprehensible. They committed errors in applying sentence structure rules in the English language. Therefore, we can conclude that these students have problems in acquiring normal grammatical rules in English.

This study has shed light on the manner in which students internalize the rules of the English. It further shows that errors analysis can help the teachers to identify in a systematic manner the specific and common language problems students have, so that they can focus more attention on these types of errors. Such an insight into language learning problems is useful to teachers because it provides information on common trouble-spots in language learning which can be used in the preparation of effective teaching materials. Also, by being able to predict errors to a certain extent, teachers can well-equipped to help students minimize or overcome their learning problems.

Implementations

To address the identified challenges in students’ written English, the following implementation strategies are recommended

1. Word Order
   - Design focused exercises that highlight differences between Thai and English word order, particularly for modifiers and adjectives.
   - Incorporate punctuation practice to emphasize the correct use of commas in linking clauses.
2. Subject-Verb Agreement and Tense
   - Conduct targeted grammar drills to reinforce subject-verb agreement rules in English.
   - Develop activities that contrast tense usage in English and Thai to clarify distinctions.
3. Infinitive and Gerund
   - Introduce structured lessons on the proper usage of infinitives and gerunds with clear examples.
   - Use comparative teaching to highlight the absence of these forms in Thai and their necessity in English.

4. Prepositions
   - Provide explicit instruction on common English prepositions and their collocations.
   - Encourage sentence construction exercises that incorporate correct prepositional use.
5. Noun Determiners
   - Teach the rules for articles and determiners through practical examples and contextual application.
   - Include practice tasks to address singular and plural form consistency.
6. Word Choice
   - Expand students' vocabulary with a focus on commonly confused words.
   - Incorporate activities that reinforce proper singular/plural noun usage, such as error correction exercises.

By implementing these strategies, educators can effectively address the influence of L1 interference and support students in developing accurate and cohesive written English skills. These findings underscore the necessity of targeted teaching strategies to address L1 interference. Educators can design instructional interventions that emphasize grammar rules, syntactic differences, and vocabulary development tailored to the unique challenges Thai learners face. Such efforts can bridge the gap between Thai and English writing systems, improving learners' written English proficiency and overall linguistic competence.

Body of Knowledge

This research highlights the significant impact of L1 (Thai) grammatical structures on the written English of Thai students. The findings identify six key categories of grammar errors arising from L1 interference, providing valuable insights into the challenges faced by learners:

1. Word Order of Thai Structure

Thai students often misapplied the Thai word order (head noun + modifier) to English, leading to misplaced adjectives and a lack of clarity. The omission of commas, which is typical in Thai writing, contributed to improperly linked clauses in English.

2. Subject-Verb Agreement and Tense

Errors in subject-verb agreement and tense application stemmed from the absence of verb conjugation rules in Thai. Students demonstrated partial understanding of tense rules but struggled with complex forms, such as the past continuous.

3. Infinitive and Gerund

The misuse of infinitives and gerunds reflected a lack of familiarity with these grammatical structures, which do not exist in Thai. Confusion arose from overuse of infinitives and difficulties in distinguishing between infinitive and gerund usage.

4. Prepositions

Errors resulted from direct translation of Thai prepositions, which lack equivalent collocations in English, such as “interested about” instead of “interested in.”

5. Noun Determiners

Frequent misuse of articles and determiners occurred due to their absence in Thai grammar. Inconsistencies were observed, such as using plural determiners with singular nouns or omitting articles altogether.

6. Word Choice and Singular/Plural Forms

Limited vocabulary and insufficient understanding of singular/plural distinctions led to incorrect word usage, such as “right” instead of “light” or “late” instead of “later.” Errors in pluralization were common, as Thai lacks plural markers for nouns.

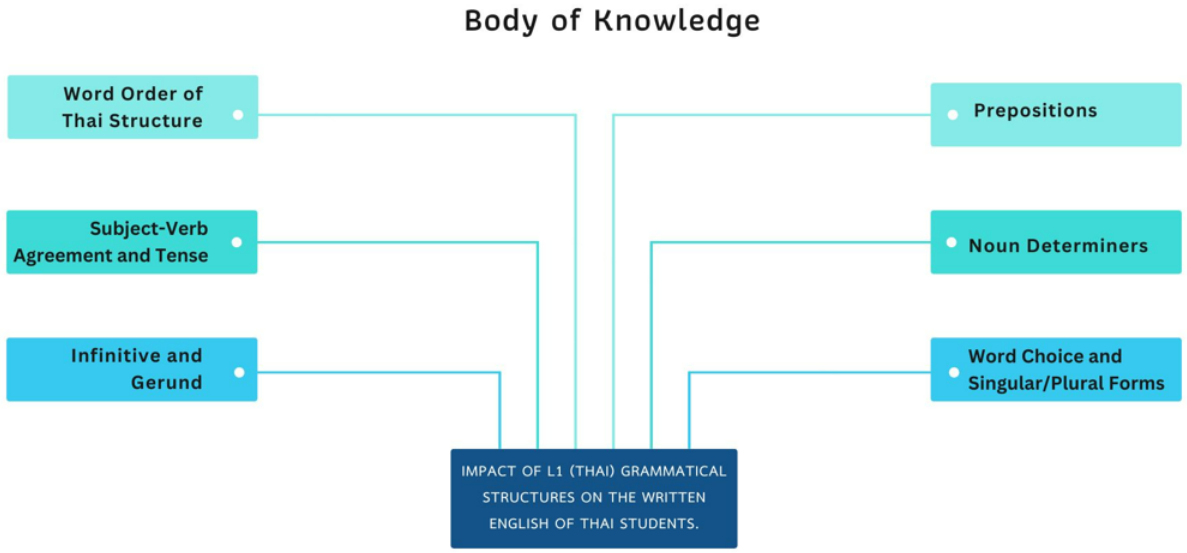


Figure 1 Body of knowledge: Impact of L1 (Thai) grammatical structures on the written English of Thai students.

Further Research Recommendations

Building on the findings of this study, the following areas are recommended for further research to enhance the understanding and mitigation of L1 interference in Thai students’ written English.

1. Comparative Studies Across Proficiency Levels
    - Investigate whether the frequency and types of grammar errors vary between students of different English proficiency levels.

- Explore whether advanced learners exhibit similar patterns of L1 interference or if their errors shift to higher-order writing issues.

2. Longitudinal Studies on Intervention Effectiveness
   - Conduct long-term research to assess the impact of targeted teaching strategies designed to address specific grammatical errors, such as word order and subject-verb agreement.
   - Evaluate the durability of learning outcomes and the persistence of L1 interference over time.

By addressing these research areas, future studies can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of L1 interference and the development of effective, evidence-based interventions tailored to Thai students' needs.

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