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Comparative Study of English Essay Writing Strategies and Difficulties as Perceived by English Major Students: A Case Study of Students in the School of Humanities, the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce

การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบกลวิธีและอุปสรรคในการเขียนเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษตามการรับรู้ของนักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ: กรณีศึกษาคณะมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยหอการค้าไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาเปรียบเทียบกลวิธีรวมทั้งอุปสรรคในการเขียนเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ ชั้นปีที่ 4 คณะมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยหอการค้าไทย จำนวน 272 คน ที่มีผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษสูงและต่ำและนักศึกษาที่มีภูมิหลังต่างกัน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยเป็นแบบสอบถามวัดกลวิธีและอุปสรรคในการเขียนเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษ วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้ค่ามัธยฐานเลขคณิต ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และ t-test ผลการวิจัยพบว่า นักศึกษาที่มีผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษสูงและต่ำนำกระบวนการเขียนทุกขั้นตอนมาปฏิบัติแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 และมีอุปสรรคในการเขียนเรียงและการใช้ภาษา

อังกฤษในการเขียนเรียงความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 นักศึกษาที่มีภูมิหลังต่างกันมีอุปสรรคในการเรียบเรียงและการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการเขียนเรียงความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 แต่เพศไม่มีผลต่อความแตกต่างด้านอุปสรรคในการเขียนเรียงความ

คำสำคัญ: เรียงความภาษาอังกฤษ กลวิธีการเขียนเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษ อุปสรรคในการเขียนเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษ

Abstract

This article presents the results of a comparative study of English essay writing strategies used and difficulties encountered by 272 fourth-year English major students from different backgrounds in both high and low English proficiency groups, at the School of Humanities, the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Percentage, Means, Standard Deviation and t-test were used for data analysis. The major findings are that between the high and low proficiency groups, significant differences at the 0.05 level occurred in all steps of the writing process when comparing English essay writing strategies used and difficulties encountered in both organizing and writing in English. The same was true when comparing difficulties encountered by students with different backgrounds; there were significant differences at the 0.05 level in both organizing and writing essays in English. Gender had no effect on difficulties encountered.

Keywords: English Essay, English Essay Writing Strategies, English Essay Writing Difficulties

Introduction

Since English is now the global language, and writing is one of the necessary means to communicate precisely, this skill is essential in order to participate competitively in global interactions and business in general. It should be the responsibility of English language instructors in an educational institute to provide and emphasize a good and correct, fundamental background of writing skills to students.

Command of good writing skills is a vital tool for anybody to succeed in their career. Anderson (1985, cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996: 152-153) carried out a survey of 841 university graduates in seven different fields of study and concluded that formal writing was significantly important in the workplace.

In Thailand, English has been taught as a foreign language for decades. However, there has now been a long period during which

instructors at university level have wondered why students could not and do not master writing skills although they have studied and practiced English writing for more than 10 years before entering university. It is now part of the national agenda to increase students' English proficiency, since it is shown that the English proficiency level among Thai students ranks lower than that of neighboring countries. Writing ability urgently needs to be improved.

At university level, writing is used both as a standard system of communication and as a tool for acquiring knowledge. Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 24-25) mention that "Students in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts will need English writing skills ranging from a simple paragraph and summary skills to the ability to write essays and professional articles."

Writing is a productive skill that needs various competencies such as linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse knowledge as well as knowledge about language use like grammar, structure and vocabulary. Furthermore, writing also calls for strategies and an organized critical way of thinking; therefore, writing is not only a single activity but a series of interrelated activities. Zamel (1982: 195-209) found that competence in the

composing process is more important than linguistic competence in the ability to write proficiently in English. Zamel also concluded that students' writing would improve when they understood and experienced composing as a process.

Since process is one of the key elements leading to a good piece of writing, various academics have identified and specified steps in the writing process based on theories of Flower and Hayes (1981) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987).

Raimes (2005: 3-42) suggests that the writing process consists of planning, drafting and revising, while Kunka (2005) suggests that the writing process comprises invention, collection, organization, drafting, revising and proofreading.

In contrast, Trimmer (2004: 5-7) mentions that the writing process can be divided into four stages: planning, drafting, revising and designing. However, Brandon (2005: 29-70) presents a writing process of only three main steps: prewriting; organizing and developing support; and writing, revising and editing.

Although there are many terms and patterns used in the writing process, the core elements are similar. They can be summed up as prewriting, writing, revising and editing.

Prewriting

Prewriting is the initial stage of writing which helps students generate ideas and prepares them to write an essay. At this stage, all ideas are preliminary and subject to change. Techniques for generating ideas for essays suggested by Wyrick (2002: 7-17) Trimmer (2004: 30-47), Brandon (2005: 31-45), and The Writing Center of the University of Kansas (2005) are free-writing or looping, clustering or mind-mapping, brainstorming, interviewing, reading and note-taking, journal writing, and surfing the Internet.

Apart from generating ideas for an essay, students should also consider the purpose of writing an essay and readers' knowledge of the topic in order to select appropriate ideas and information for their essays.

Writing

Writing or drafting means producing a preliminary written version from the outline. It is the way to convert ideas into words. Most writers write straight through the first draft without stopping to make correction. At this stage, the outline is used as a guide to form the essay. The writer also uses his/her linguistic competence and discourse knowledge to get the ideas across to the reader.

Revising

Revising is the time to make improvement to a piece of writing. Changes can be made to content and organization by adding and deleting details, or improving clarity, style and flow of ideas.

Editing

Editing includes checking various aspects on the surface level such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar or page formatting to ensure that appropriate conventions are met.

Writing steps: prewriting, writing, revising and editing are therefore introduced to students in the hope that they will follow these steps, go through the process using critical thinking and reasoning skills and be able to produce a good piece of writing. Hyland (2003:12) emphasizes that "The teacher's role is to guide students through the writing process, avoiding an emphasis on form to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting and refining ideas."

Since writing has always been regarded as a difficult skill, instructors of English writing skills accept that students' writing abilities may not reach a satisfactory level. They have attempted to deal with student errors as mentioned in several research papers

(Nattama Pongpairoj, 2545: 66-95; พิชญ์สินี ชาวอุไร, 2545-2546: 144-148; วณิดา พลอยสังวาลย์, 2546: 71-85). The errors found in students' writing show that they face severe difficulties due to their lack of essay writing strategies as well as lack of language proficiency.

Therefore, simply reading students' texts, pointing out errors and giving feedback by instructors might not be enough to help students improve their writing ability. In order to assist students to overcome difficulties, it is necessary to examine what students actually think and do when they write. The results can reveal their strength and weaknesses and will give opportunities for instructors to advise and provide assistance regarding their writing practice in a more practical and flexible way, leading to a more supportive classroom environment.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study are

1. To investigate English essay writing strategies used and difficulties encountered by English major students at the School of Humanities, the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce

2. To compare English essay writing strategies used and difficulties encountered by high and low English language proficiency students

3. To compare English writing difficulties encountered by students with different backgrounds in terms of gender, practice versus no practice of English language skills outside the classroom, and practice of writing skills versus practice of other English language skills outside the classroom.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will hopefully be beneficial for instructors in their teaching and for students in their learning about English essay writing. The information from this study can be used to adjust teaching techniques to accommodate each group of students. The results will give data to instructors regarding where to intervene in the writing process and how to help ease the students' difficulties during their writing practice.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on strategies used in writing English essays by the fourth-year English major students, and on the difficulties they experienced during the essay writing process. Writing strategies refer to the four steps: prewriting, writing, revising and editing. Difficulties in writing English essays were categorized according to difficulties in organizing essays and difficulties in English usage.

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects comprised 272 fourth-year English major students enrolled during the academic year 2005 in the School of Humanities, the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. In the semesters prior to this research, the subjects had already completed two writing courses which concentrated on paragraph and essay writing.

In order to compare English essay writing strategies used and difficulties encountered by high and low proficiency students, the subjects were divided into high and low proficiency groups based on the collective grade point average from 13 required and elective English courses with emphasis on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Out of 272 students, the 104 subjects with English grade point averages (GPA) of 3.00 and above were classified as a high English proficiency group and the 97 subjects with English grade point averages of 2.50 and below were placed in the low English proficiency group. Seventy-one subjects with grade point averages between 2.51 and 2.99 were not included in either group in order to make a clear distinction between high and low proficiency groups.

In order to compare the difficulties encountered by students with different backgrounds, all 272 subjects were grouped according to 1) gender 2) practice versus no practice of English language skills outside the classroom, and 3) practice of writing skills versus practice of other English language skills outside the classroom.

Instrument

The instrument used was a three-part schedule questionnaire. The first part, in the form of a check list, dealt with the subjects' biographical data. The second part, in the form of a rating scale, investigated strategies used in preparing and writing each part of an essay. The third part, in the form of a rating scale, examined the area and extent of difficulties experienced by the subjects when composing English essays.

The questionnaire was checked by three experts for content validity and objectivity and then was tried out on 50 fourth-year English major students for question clarity and reliability before it was used in the study. The reliability of part two was 0.837 and that of part three was 0.842.

Data Collection Procedure

Following the try-out, analysis and revision of the questionnaire, the data collection

procedure was administered by the researcher present in class. The day and time for data collection was scheduled in advance. During the procedure, all questions in the questionnaire were explained to the subjects to ensure their understanding and there were opportunities for the subjects to ask for clarification and examples. The time frame was between 30 and 40 minutes depending on number of questions. Questions were answered in the same way and manner in all groups, based on the researcher's written note.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, means and standard deviation. To compare writing strategies used and difficulties encountered between high and low proficiency students, and between students with different backgrounds, the data were analyzed by using t-test.

Results

1. English essay writing strategies used and difficulties encountered by English major students were as follows:

1.1 Prewriting Stage

At the prewriting stage, the most used method for gathering information for the essay was the Internet ($\bar{x} = 3.95$). The other two

methods were listing any ideas that students could think of ($\bar{x} = 3.53$) and discussion with friends ($\bar{x} = 3.40$) respectively. When students planned an essay, they paid most attention to setting the main idea ($\bar{x} = 3.96$), but the least attention was given to considering readers' knowledge about the topic ($\bar{x} = 2.84$).

1.2 Writing Stage

During the writing stage, students wrote the introduction by using mostly short stories and events ($\bar{x} = 3.39$). For the body of the essays, students placed the topic sentence as the first sentence in a paragraph ($\bar{x} = 4.16$). To end essays, students wrote the conclusion by summarizing the main points ($\bar{x} = 4.37$). Cohesive markers used the most were transitional words ($\bar{x} = 4.32$).

1.3 Revising and Editing Stage

Students revised and edited essays by checking spelling ($\bar{x} = 3.93$), capitalization ($\bar{x} = 3.70$) and grammar ($\bar{x} = 3.69$) respectively.

1.4 Strategies Used in Composing Essays in English

Concerning composing essays in English, the most used strategy was consulting Thai-English dictionaries ($\bar{x} = 4.45$). This was related to the strategy of translating directly from Thai to English ($\bar{x} = 3.37$). Consulting grammar books was used the least ($\bar{x} = 2.89$).

1.5 Difficulties in Writing Essays

Considering difficulties in organizing essays, students reported getting the reader's attention as being the most difficult part ($\bar{x} = 3.72$). Regarding writing English language essays, using verb tenses was the most difficult part for students ($\bar{x} = 3.81$).

2. Comparing high and low proficiency groups, English essay writing strategies used were as follows:

2.1 Prewriting Stage

Regarding gathering information for the essay, significant differences at the 0.05 level were found between high and low proficiency groups in using the Internet (high group $\bar{x} = 4.22$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.69$), observation (high group $\bar{x} = 3.02$, low group $\bar{x} = 2.68$), mind mapping (high group $\bar{x} = 2.84$, low group $\bar{x} = 2.25$) and listing any ideas they could think of (high group $\bar{x} = 3.66$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.35$).

Regarding planning an essay, there were significant differences at the 0.05 level in analyzing the essay topic (high group $\bar{x} = 4.05$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.78$), considering the purpose of writing (high group $\bar{x} = 4.04$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.44$), writing an outline (high group $\bar{x} = 3.86$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.40$) and setting the main idea (high group $\bar{x} = 4.22$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.77$).

2.2 Writing Stage

Concerning the writing stage, there were significant differences at the 0.05 level in using facts and statistics (high group $\bar{x} = 3.71$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.14$) in the introduction part. With reference to coherence employed in essays, both groups used transitional words, (high group $\bar{x} = 4.40$, low group $\bar{x} = 4.14$) and pronoun references (high group $\bar{x} = 4.16$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.64$). In the conclusion part, significant differences were found in summarizing main points (high group $\bar{x} = 4.63$, low group $\bar{x} = 2.73$), making a prediction (high group $\bar{x} = 2.75$, low group $\bar{x} = 2.39$), and providing a solution (high group $\bar{x} = 3.28$, low group $\bar{x} = 2.73$).

2.3 Revising and Editing Stage

In the revising and editing stage, both high and low proficiency groups checked spelling the most (high group $\bar{x} = 4.05$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.81$). There were significant differences at the 0.05 level between the two groups in deleting unnecessary points (high group $\bar{x} = 3.17$, low group $\bar{x} = 2.77$), changing the order of sentences (high group $\bar{x} = 3.45$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.09$), and paying attention to the formal style of language (high group $\bar{x} = 3.22$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.09$).

2.4 Comparison of Strategies for Writing Essays in English between High and Low Proficiency Groups

Comparing strategies used for writing essays in English between the high and low proficiency groups, significant differences at the 0.05 level were found in consulting English-English dictionaries (high group $\bar{x} = 3.76$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.02$), translating directly from Thai to English (high group $\bar{x} = 3.05$, low group $\bar{x} = 3.72$), consulting grammar books (high group $\bar{x} = 3.20$, low group $\bar{x} = 2.56$) and imitating the structure of a paragraph read previously (high group $\bar{x} = 3.30$, low group $\bar{x} = 2.86$).

2.5 Difficulties in Writing Essays Encountered by High and Low Proficiency Groups

In terms of difficulties in organizing essays, the high proficiency group had difficulties in getting started ($\bar{x} = 3.73$), while the low proficiency group experienced getting readers' attention ($\bar{x} = 3.69$) as the most difficult. Considering the difficulties of the high and low proficiency groups in writing in English, the low proficiency group had more difficulties than the high proficiency group in all items on the questionnaire.

3. Comparison of Difficulties Encountered by Students with Different Backgrounds

This study incorporated the factors of 1) gender, 2) practice versus no practice of English language skills outside the classroom

and 3) practice of writing skills versus practice of other English language skills outside the classroom.

3.1 Gender

Gender does not cause any difference in the difficulties they encountered.

3.2 Practice versus No Practice of English Language Skills Outside Classroom

In terms of organizing essays, significant differences at the 0.05 level were found in getting started (students practicing English $\bar{x} = 3.54$, students not practicing English $\bar{x} = 4.15$); spending too long reading and thinking (students practicing English $\bar{x} = 3.51$, students not practicing English $\bar{x} = 3.97$); and building up confidence to begin writing (students practicing English $\bar{x} = 2.83$, students not practicing English $\bar{x} = 3.32$). In terms of writing in English, there were significant differences at the 0.05 level in choosing the right words (students practicing English $\bar{x} = 3.69$, students not practicing English $\bar{x} = 4.00$); using passive voice (students practicing English $\bar{x} = 3.34$, students not practicing English $\bar{x} = 3.70$), and verb tenses (students practicing English $\bar{x} = 3.72$, students not practicing English $\bar{x} = 4.09$).

3.3 Practice of Writing Skills versus Practice of Other English Language Skills Outside Classroom

Both groups reported the same first three difficulties in writing in English, which are choosing the right words (students practicing writing skills $\bar{x} = 3.81$, students practicing other skills $\bar{x} = 3.77$), ordering ideas into sentences (students practicing writing skills $\bar{x} = 3.44$, students practicing other skills $\bar{x} = 3.55$), and using verb tenses (students practicing writing skills $\bar{x} = 3.38$, students practicing other skills $\bar{x} = 3.84$).

Discussion

From the results of the study, the following points of interest can be stated.

1. English Essay Writing Strategies

1.1 At the prewriting stage, students gathered information for the essay by searching the Internet; the most practiced method. It is quite clear that the Internet has become the most used source of information. Since students are highly skilled at operating a computer and have easy access to the Internet, they can use various search engines to get information. However, the high proficiency group used it to a greater extent.

The high proficiency group used discussion with friends more than the low proficiency group. This corresponds with Lukkunaprasit and Kannasuth (ดวงตา ลักคุณะประสิทธิ์ และ กรองแก้ว กรรณสูต, 2548: 33) who concluded that brainstorming was the most effective and

the most frequently used method among high performance students.

Interestingly, both high and low proficiency groups considered readers' knowledge about the topic the least important prewriting step. This might result from the expectation that their instructor would be the only reader of their essay since writing constituted their assignments.

1.2 In the writing stage, both high and low proficiency students placed the topic sentence as the first sentence in a paragraph. The result is consistent with the study by Liu (2005) who found that a higher percentage of American and Chinese students used the thesis statement at the beginning of their argumentative essay.

Cohesive markers used in essays were mostly transitional words. The reason might be that transitional words are the easiest and the most obvious device to show relationship of ideas. This result agrees with Choi's study (2005) which shows that both American and Korean students participating in his study used conjunctions and logical connectives most often in their essays.

1.3 At the revising and editing stage, students paid attention to spelling, capitalization and grammar. This result is supported by Paulus (1999) who found that

students revised and edited only on the surface level without changing or rearranging ideas and Sommers (1980) who found that less skilled writers revised in more limited ways and rarely modified ideas.

1.4 When using English in writing essays, the students used Thai-English dictionaries and translated directly from Thai to English. This shows that students planned and composed essays in Thai and translated into English. It is, of course, natural for students to form ideas in their first language. The result is relevant according to Meechang (อารีรักษ์ มีแจ้จ้ง, 2543: 91), who pointed out that her subjects generated ideas in Thai and then translated into English at high level. The difficult part for Thai students is to express their thoughts in appropriate English. Errors caused by translating into English can be expected since Thai and English language structures are very different. Brown (1980: 8) concludes that translation is one of the crucial problems in learning a language since there may be first language interference which can cause errors in the target language.

2. Difficulties in Writing English Essays

2.1 Difficulties in Organizing Essays

When organizing essays, getting readers' attention was reported as the first, most difficult part for the low proficiency group and the second most difficult part for the

high proficiency group. As reported earlier, students did not pay attention to readers' knowledge; therefore, getting readers' attention turned out to be difficult for students.

2.2 Difficulties in Writing in English

The major difficulty was verb tenses. Using verb tenses has always been a serious difficulty and problem in writing for most Thai students. The studies by Ploysangwal (วนิดา พลอยสังวาลย์, 2546: 76) and Khao-urai (พิชญ์ลีณี ชาวอุไร, 2545-2546: 147) show that using verb tenses was one of the first two problems found among Thai university students. Since there are no morphological markers conveying tenses in Thai language, students are not familiar with tense distinctions.

Another major difficulty encountered by students is word choice. When students translate from Thai to English and depend mostly on Thai-English dictionaries, choosing the right word to fit the context is, of course, difficult, especially when students have low English language skills. Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 43) and Myles (2002) state that limited knowledge of vocabulary, language structure and content constrains a second language writer's performance. Pongpairaj (Nattama Pongpairaj, 2002: 73-82) and Khao-urai (พิชญ์ลีณี ชาวอุไร, 2545-2546: 148) state that

students made syntactic errors because of mother tongue interference.

3. Difficulties in Writing English Essays Encountered by Students with Different Backgrounds

3.1 Gender

Both male and female students experienced the same difficulties in organizing and composing essays in English. It can be concluded from the results that gender does not cause any difference in difficulties encountered.

3.2 Practice versus No Practice of English Language Skills Outside Classroom

Both groups reported the first three difficulties as getting started, spending too much time reading and thinking, and getting readers' attention. This shows that although students practice English outside the classroom, they still lack confidence to write. However, they reported these difficulties to a lesser degree compared to the group not practicing English outside the classroom. This might indicate that students who are exposed to English found writing tasks more manageable to deal with.

3.3 Practice of Writing Skills versus Practice of Other English Language Skills Outside Classroom

Both groups reported the same difficulties in choosing the right words, ordering ideas into sentences and using verb tenses. Writing e-mail to friends as a way of practicing writing skills outside the classroom does not help eliminate the difficulties in writing essays. This might be because e-mails among friends are written with an easygoing tone without format and formality. Consequently, difficulties still arise when they need to write an essay.

Implications and Recommendations

Although this study was carried out with Humanities English major students at the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, there may be some similarities to situations and contexts in other universities. Recommendations presented here are hopefully useful, to some extent, to all English writing instructors.

Since writing is learnt through practice, instructors should provide positive and cooperative learning opportunities in which students feel comfortable to express themselves without being afraid of the teachers' "red ink".

Teachers could stimulate students' thinking through various prewriting strategies. Since students used the Internet as a major source of information, they should be urged

to verify all information because both reliable and unreliable information can be so easily accessed. Moreover, the risk of copying information without citing the source and the consequences of plagiarism should be emphasized.

Apart from gathering information from the Internet, students can be trained to use free writing more often. Five to ten minutes of free writing can be used as a warm-up activity at the beginning of a period. This practice can make students feel at ease expressing their ideas without focusing on correct grammar. This will make them concentrate first on content and then later on correct form. For unskilled writers, giving attention to both content and form at the same time can block the flow of ideas. If low proficiency students find this technique too difficult by claiming that they do not have any ideas what to write about, instructors can begin with oral dictation to make them get used to fast writing as well as letting them have a chance to write English sentences frequently in class.

Encouraging students to consider readers' knowledge during the prewriting stage should be stressed. It would be an advantage if instructors design activities that create specific readers other than the instructors themselves so that students have a clear

context for writing.

The results show that students planned their essays in Thai language and then translated into English by using Thai-English dictionaries. Therefore, instructors should emphasize the different nature of each language of which students should be aware when they translate from Thai to English. Moreover, students should be encouraged to use English-English dictionaries more since they can learn structures and the usage of words from explanations and examples.

Regarding feedback, instructors could give feedback on content and form separately. It might be too much for students to both rearrange ideas and concentrate on form at the same time. This might be the reason why students revised only on the surface level like checking spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Oral conferences between the instructor and students is recommended for revising the content. However, instructors should be well aware that their role is to guide students through the process, not to hint at or impose their own ideas on students.

It is shown from the data that students had no problem accepting comments from peers. Instructors should encourage peer conferencing among students to train them to read critically, learn to share ideas and accept other people's opinion.

Concerning difficulties in writing in English, students had problems in using verb tenses and choosing the right word for the context. Instead of teaching and drilling grammar points in class, instructors could suggest web sites about grammar revisions, vocabulary practice and even writing tips that offer numerous explanations and exercises for student practice.

Further research can be conducted on peer conferencing to find out appropriate methods for Thai classroom environment. Successful ways of training students to give feedback will help reduce the teacher's load.

All in all, instructors could try to create a positive atmosphere for students to practice, such as organizing activities to facilitate writing tasks. It is important to make students realize that instructors are concerned more about their acquisition of the writing process than about grading them. In line with this suggestion, instructors' roles should be as facilitators and guides in order to assist students in getting through the writing process successfully, instead of performing the single role of evaluators checking accuracy and correctness of the language and grading the paper. It is really a discouragement for students to see only "red ink" when they get their work back.

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