

AN EVALUATION OF THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS BY THAI  
TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AND NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING TEACHERS



A THESIS

BY

PITCHAYA CHUMMUEANGYEN

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language  
at Srinakharinwirot University

July 2017

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This study aims to investigate the differences between Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' evaluation on students' argumentative essays and to find out the reasons behind their scoring. Six university teachers were the participants of this study: three of which are native speakers of English and the other three are Thai teachers of English. Each of them were asked to evaluate ten argumentative essays by giving a holistic score of up to 10 points. Upon completion of the essay evaluation, they were interviewed individually. They were required to provide reasons for the scores they have given for each essay. The essays evaluated by each group of teachers were collected and analyzed for mean scores. The interview data were analyzed through content analysis method. The findings revealed that both groups of teachers were relatively different in terms of their evaluation of the essays. Thai teachers of English gave lower scores than the native English speaking teachers. The mean scores given by Thai teachers was 5.53 compare to that of native English speaking teachers of 6.38. The analysis of teachers' interview comments revealed that Thai teachers of English focused more on grammar while native English speaking teachers focused more on content.

**Keywords:** Writing evaluation, Thai teachers of English, Native English speaking teachers

การตรวจงานเขียนของนิสิตโดยอาจารย์สอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทย  
และอาจารย์เจ้าของภาษา



บทคัดย่อ  
ของ  
พินิจ ชุ่มเมืองเย็น

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา  
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ

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งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการตรวจงานเขียนของนิสิต ระหว่างอาจารย์สอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทยสามท่าน และอาจารย์เจ้าของภาษาสามท่าน รวมไปถึงเหตุผลสำหรับการให้คะแนน ผู้เข้าร่วมในงานวิจัยคืออาจารย์ที่สอนในระดับมหาวิทยาลัย อาจารย์แต่ละท่านได้รับงานเขียนเรียงความของนิสิตจำนวน 10 ชุด และให้คะแนนแต่ละเรียงความโดยคะแนนสูงสุดอยู่ที่ 10 คะแนน และให้ความคิดเห็นสำหรับแต่ละเรียงความ หลังจากนั้นอาจารย์แต่ละท่านจะได้รับการสัมภาษณ์ถึงเหตุผลที่ใช้ในการตรวจงานเขียนของนิสิต คะแนนจากการตรวจงานเขียนของนิสิตถูกรวบรวม และหาว่ามีความแตกต่างในการตรวจงานเขียนของนิสิต ระหว่างอาจารย์สอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทย และอาจารย์เจ้าของภาษาหรือไม่ ความคิดเห็น และข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์จะถูกนำมาวิเคราะห์เพื่อหาเหตุผลสำหรับการให้คะแนนของแต่ละท่าน ผลลัพธ์ที่ได้จากการศึกษาการตรวจงานเขียนของนิสิตพบว่าอาจารย์สอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทย และอาจารย์เจ้าของภาษาตรวจงานเขียนของนิสิตต่างกัน อาจารย์สอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทยให้คะแนนต่ำกว่าอาจารย์เจ้าของภาษา คะแนนเฉลี่ยของอาจารย์สอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทยอยู่ที่ 5.53 เมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับอาจารย์เจ้าของภาษาคะแนนเฉลี่ยอยู่ที่ 6.63 ทั้งนี้การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลจากการให้สัมภาษณ์ และจากการแสดงความคิดเห็นของอาจารย์สอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทย และอาจารย์เจ้าของภาษาที่ได้แสดงความคิดเห็นต่องานเขียนของนิสิตพบว่า อาจารย์สอนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทยมุ่งเน้นไปที่ไวยากรณ์ ในขณะที่อาจารย์เจ้าของภาษามุ่งเน้นไปทางด้านเนื้อหา

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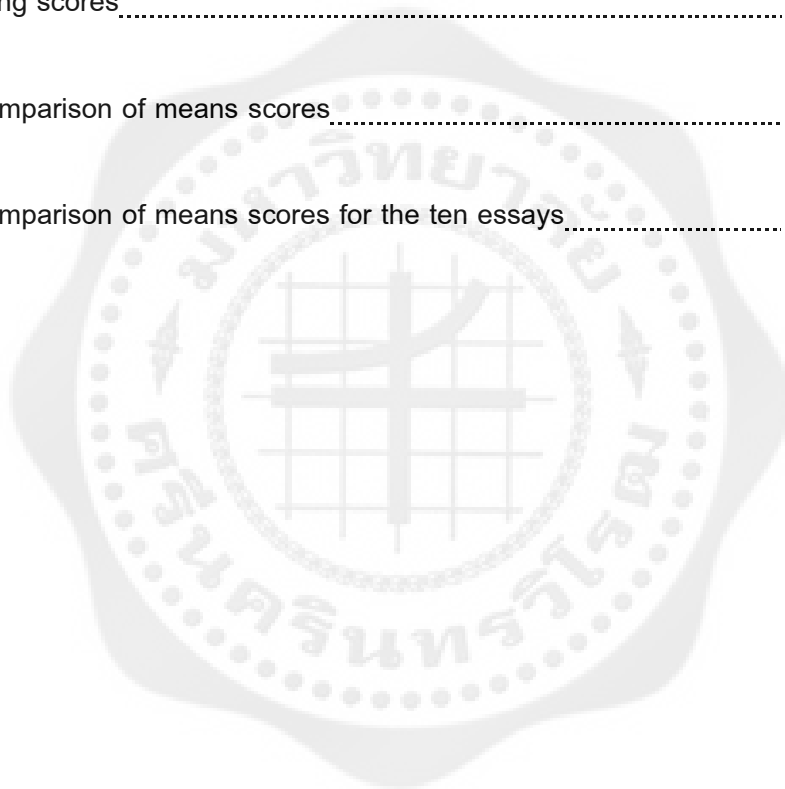


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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Learning a foreign language, particularly English, is very important and essential to daily life especially in today's global society. It serves as a powerful tool for professional development and advancement throughout the world. Since the ability to communicate effectively in English is widely regarded as an essential skill, many countries devote considerable resources to its English language education (Hayes, 2016).

Evans, Hartshorn and Tuioti (2010) posit that a strong command of written English is the most important skill. It is probably because many books, manuals, and technological information are all written in English (Wong, 2013). Similarly, in the business world, written English plays an important role as can be seen in companies' email correspondence (Gimenez, 2006). In a Thai educational context, Chuenchaichon (2015) states that the English language is generally used in both educational and professional arenas. In an academically-oriented context, writing skills are important because students are typically required to produce a wide range of different kinds of written texts for assessment purposes (Ur, 1996), particularly college or university students. (Rattanadilok Na Phuket, 2015). Moreover, a strong command of written English helps increase the opportunities for career advancement. Therefore, having good English writing skills is an important factor that leads to both academic and professional success.

In Thailand, English is commonly taught by both native and non-native English speaking teachers (Todd & Pojanapunya, 2009). Native speakers are people who speak English as their first language, mother tongue or L1 (Medgyes, 2001). According to Cook (1999), a non-native speaker refers to a person who uses English as a second language. As far as the English language teaching is concerned, native and non-native English speaking teachers are relatively different in terms of their pedagogical practices (Medgyes, 2001). In the context of English writing instruction, Connor-Linton (1995) found that non-native English speaking teachers focus on accuracy, which is word choice, and linguistic features, whereas native English speaking teachers emphasize on grammar. Furthermore, non-native and native English speaking teachers also differ in the way they grade their student's writing assignments. Native English speaking teachers provided far more corrections and corrected errors more accurately, whereas non-native English speaking teachers left many errors uncorrected, such as articles, number, prepositions, and lexical items which occur in Japanese as loan words from English (Kobayashi, 1992).

A growing number of studies have investigated whether native and non-native English speaking teachers are different when they evaluate their students' essays. Brown (1991) found that there were no statistically significant differences between the holistic score given by native and non-native teachers. However, there were some differences when it came to the reason behind their scoring process. Song and Caruso (1996) indicated that native and non-native English speaking teachers varied significantly when they evaluated their students' essays. Native English speaking teachers gave greater weight to the overall content and quality rather than to language usage for the holistic score decision, while non-native English speaking teachers

focused more on grammatical accuracy. Similarly, Lee (2009) also indicated that native English speaking teachers had an overriding tendency of putting more importance on content, while non-native speakers focused on a wider spectrum of content, organization, and grammar. According to Shi (2001), native and non-native English speaking teachers focused on different areas when they provided feedback on their students' essays, i.e., native English speaking teachers focused on language, whereas non-native English speaking teachers concerned with content and organization. Therefore, it can be seen that native and non-native English speaking teachers vary when it comes to writing evaluation. Both groups of teachers focused on different areas when they evaluated students' essays.

In a Thai educational context, the study of Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' evaluation on English writing is quite rare (Chuenchaichon, 2015). There have been numerous studies which focus on teachers' feedback, peer feedback, approaches to teaching writing and writing assessment (Chatranonth, 2008; Kulsirisawad, 2012; Yang, 2010; Chamcharatsri, 2010; Hamidun, Hashim, and Othman, 2012; Srichanyachon, 2012; Puengpipattrakul, 2013). The same, however, cannot be said about investigations pertaining to the differences on writing evaluation. Additionally, the contrasts in feedback given by native and non-native English speaking teachers have, for the most part, been largely overlooked. Hence, a research study on non-native and native English speaking teachers is very much needed to fill the gap of English writing evaluation studies. The result of this study will help us to better gain insights in both groups of English language teachers' evaluation of English writing.

## **Objectives of the study**

This study addresses two objectives as follows:

1. To investigate the differences between Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' evaluation on students' English essays.
2. To explore Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' reasons behind the essay scoring.

## **Research questions**

This study aims to find out the answers for two research questions as follows:

1. Are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers different when they evaluate the students' essays?
2. What are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' reasons behind the essays scoring?

## **Significance of the study**

As mentioned earlier, studies on how Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers evaluate students' essays are quite rare, this study will fill the gap in previous research and add a new body of knowledge to EFL writing pedagogy. Furthermore, learning more about Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' differences on writing

evaluation and the reasons behind their scoring will help us to better gain insights in both groups of English teachers' essays evaluation.

### **Scope of the Study**

This is a mixed method research which aimed at investigating how Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers evaluate on English essays and their reasons behind their essay scoring. The essays used in this study were ten argumentative essays from English major students at Srinakharinwirot University. The participants in this study were six teachers which were three Thai teachers of English and three native English speaking teachers. The first group of participants were Thai nationals. The second group of participants were from the inner circle of Kachru's classification (1985), they were traditionally considered to be native speakers of English. Both groups of teachers held doctoral degrees and teaching certificates. They taught English writing and worked at a tertiary level for more than six years. In addition, they were teaching at Srinakharinwirot University at the time of the research. The time frame of the study was 16 weeks.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **1. Native English speaking teachers**

Native English speaking teacher in this study is a person who speaks English as their native language. English is their mother tongue, first language or L1 (Medgyes, 2001).

Furthermore, native English speaking teachers in this study were from the inner circle of Kachru's classification (1985).

## **2. Students' essays**

Students' essays in this study refer to argumentative essays from English major students at Srinakharinwirot University. All essays were of the same topic. The argumentative essay was a part of their final exam. The length of essays was approximately 250-270 words.

## **3. Essay evaluation**

In this study, the participants were asked to evaluate 10 pieces of students' argumentative essays by giving a holistic score of a 10 point scale and they were asked to give comments for each essay.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aims to investigate the differences between Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' evaluation on English writing. This study also investigates their reasoning behind their scoring. This chapter presents related literature including native and non-native speakers, the advantages and disadvantages of having native and non-native English speaking teachers, writing evaluation and related studies.

#### **Native and non-native speakers**

The English language plays an important role in Thailand as it does in many other developing countries. A person with a good command of English is required in business and educational arenas. It probably explains why the English language is the first foreign language which students must study in schools which is commonly taught by both native and non-native English speaking teachers (Wiriyachitra, 2002; Phothongsunan & Suwanarak, 2008; Todd & Pojanapunya, 2008).

A number of pedagogic research related to English teachers who are native and non-native speakers has been increasing recently (Kobayashi, 1992; Gill & Rebrova, 2001; Shi, 2001; Phothongsunan & Suwanarak, 2008; Braine, 2010; Khongput, 2010; Duong & Walkinshaw; 2010). Cook (1999) describes a native English speaker as the one who acquires his/her first language (i.e., English) in their childhood. Similarly, Davies (1991) defines a native English

speaker as someone who speaks English as his/her native language, also called mother tongue. Chang and Chang (2013) states that native English speakers are believed to use the language appropriately because they know all the rules and forms of the language. On the other hand, Green (2010) defines non-native English speaker as a person whose first language is not English. Similarly to earlier study by Liu's (1999), a non-native speaker is perceived as a person whose mother tongue is not English. In conclusion, the terms native and non-native are controversial and tend to be circular. Native speakers often refer to people who speak English as their first language, L1 or mother tongue. Non-native speaker, on the other hand, is often defined as contrast of native speakers (Davies, 2003).

According to Kachru's model (1985), there are three circles which refer to both native and non-native speakers. The inner circle refers to the traditional bases of English, where English is the primary language. The countries included in this circle are the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada,

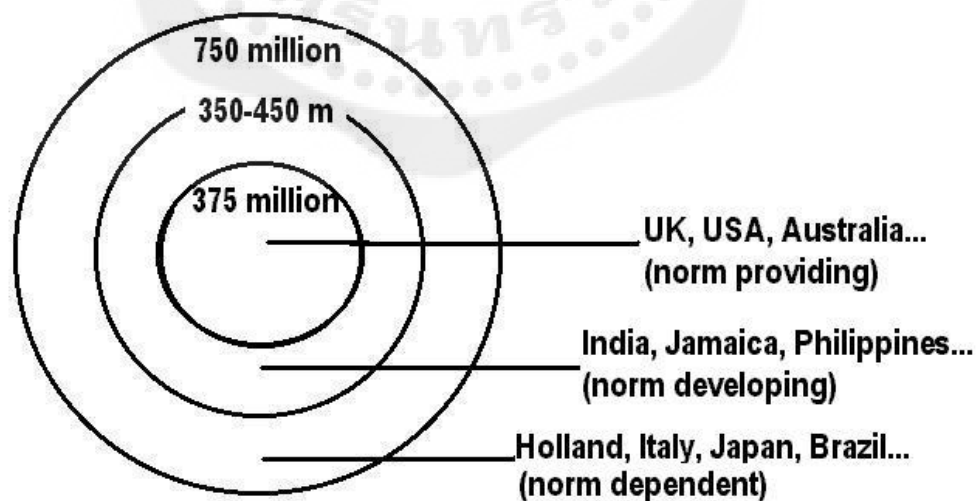


Figure 1: Kachru's classification of English as a World Language as consisting of three circles

Australia and New Zealand. Next, the outer or extended circle refers to the countries in which English language is not the mother tongue but plays an important role in education, governance, and popular culture. This circle includes India, Singapore, the Philippines, Malawi, Rwanda and over fifty other territories are also included in this circle. Lastly, the expanding circle refers to the countries that acknowledge the importance of English as an international language. English language is taught as a foreign language and used as a vital tool to communicate with other countries. The countries in this circle include Holland, Italy, Japan, and Brazil along with many other European, South American, Asian and African countries. Thailand is also categorized in the expanding circle, where English is taught as a foreign language. This study adopts on Kachru's definition because this model of English classification is considered one of the most influential models to classify native and non-native speakers (Mollin, 2006).

### **The advantages and disadvantages of having native and non-native English speaking teachers**

There have been arguments against the abilities of native and non-native English speaking teachers. Many studies present both strengths and weaknesses of each group of teachers (Vesterinen, 2016; Tajeddin & Akeh, 2016; Alwadi, 2013; Ma & Ping 2012; Phothongsunan & Suwannarak, 2008; Medgyes, 2001).

Vesterinen (2016) did a study on students' perception towards native and non-native English speaking teachers in a Finish context. The results showed that native English speaking

teachers were perceived as a better role models of fluent language users because they had more cultural knowledge. On the other hand, non-native English speaking teachers were viewed as having better perceptions in terms of grammatical teaching because they understand English grammar and studying it more theoretically. They were able to explain to students in their mother tongue. In contrast, native English speaking teachers are unable to help or explain difficult grammatical concepts in the students' mother tongue.

On a similar vein, Tajeddin and Adeh (2016), investigated teachers' perceptions of their professional identity and have found that non-native English speaking teachers are better at teaching English grammar. They are able to explain grammatical rules more effectively as they are familiar with the context and culture of the students. Therefore, they understand the students better. However, non-native English speaking teachers believed that native English speaking teachers had better speaking skills because they have an extensive knowledge of English, greater self-confidence and better pronunciation. The results have also showed that non-native English speaking teachers have less confidence compared with native English speaking teachers when teaching speaking.

According to an earlier study in a Taiwanese context which was conducted by Liaw (2012), the researcher examined student perspectives on the differences between native and non-native English speaking teachers. The results showed the advantages and disadvantages of both groups of teachers. Native English speaking teachers had better pronunciation and cultural knowledge. Students believed that native English speaking teachers were better when learning

oral communication with them. In contrast, non-native English speaking teachers were better at teaching specific linguistic areas such as grammar, sentence structures, and semantic choice. They had better understanding in learning difficulties and classroom interactions because they could empathize with their students as they had been language learners themselves.

Certain conclusions can be taken from previous studies. Firstly, all studies seem to correlate in their finding of native English speaking teachers' superior linguistic capabilities. One went as far as to state native English speaking teachers had more confidence when it came to teach speaking in the classroom. Despite native English speaking teachers' dominance in the oral teaching section, they paled in comparison to non-native English speaking teachers in the grammatical, written and overall understanding sections of English teaching. As with the 'native' of English speaking teachers, these three studies drew a relatively similar conclusion on the strength of the non-native English speaking teachers. They all discovered students' preference to learning grammar from non-native English teachers for similar reason. These ranged from a high degree of empathy and cultural learning styles to an ability to better explain and describe rules and functions of English due to shared language.

### **Writing evaluation**

When it comes to evaluating writing, teachers have several ways to evaluate students' work. They often have differences when it comes to making criteria. (Erdosy, 2003; Lumely, 2002; Lumely, 2006). The scoring guidelines or criteria used to evaluate writing are known as rubrics (Jeong, 2015). Lovorn and Rezaei (2011) defined rubric as a set of evaluating criteria. There are

holistic and analytical rubric or a combination of two. Holistic rubrics emphasize on product-oriented than process-oriented, or focus with the total performance. On the other hand, analytic rubrics do not focus on the overall of writing but on separate scales that are set to evaluate writing (Finson & Ormsbee 1998).

On the same vein, Bailey (1998) identified three categories for writing evaluation. These three traditional approaches are holistic, analytic, and objective scoring. These categories are vital tools in understanding how people approach assessing English writing.

As for holistic scoring, a rater will not think about the individual component of the writing skills or to count the number or errors that students make.

<b>WRITING SCORES</b>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>The writer has very strong organizational, structural, and grammatical skills.</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>The writer has good organizational, structural, and grammatical skills. However, the essay contains some errors.</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>The writer has adequate organizational, structural, and grammatical skills. The essay contains a number of errors.</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>The writer shows evidence of organizational, structural, and grammatical skills that still need to be improved.</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>The writer shows a minimal ability to convey ideas in written English.</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>The writer is not capable of conveying ideas in written English.</b>

*Figure 2: Writing scores. From Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL Test (p.475), by Phillips.*

D., 2001, New York: Pearson Education. Reprinted with permission.

Phillips (2001) states that the scoring scale for TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is 1-6, where 1 is the lowest score and 6 is the highest score. Phillips (2001) breaks the writing score into six scales. The score helps to define the marking criteria and to establish the minimum requirements to achieve the overall mark at that level. This allows the rater to make a decision for scoring essays. It can be seen that the explanation for each score is clear and can be distinguished. If the essay is clearly organized, the ideas well developed, the sentence structure correct and only a few grammatical errors, the essay will score six, the highest rank.

Regarding analytic scoring, a rater evaluates students' performance on a variety of categories (Bailey, 1998). The widely used analytic scale for scoring ESL writing consists of five components and the weights given to these five components are different, 13-30 points for content, 7-20 points for organization, 7-20 points for vocabulary as well, 5-25 points for language and 2-5 points mechanics (Jacobs, Zingraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel & Hughey, 1981).

With regard to objective scoring, quantified methods of evaluating students' writing. Are relied on. Brodkey and Young (1981, p.160), they describe the scoring procedure into four steps:

1. Count the words (250) of the essay
2. Go through the essay underlining every mistake from spelling and mechanics
3. Assign a weight score to each error from three to one where one is a minor error and three is a severe distortion of readability or flow ideas
4. Calculate the essay correctness score by using 250 words as the numerator of a fraction, and the sum of error scores as the denominator."

It can be seen that there are more than one way to evaluate an essay. However, native and non-native English speaking teachers applied different criteria when they evaluate students' essays (Connor-Linton, 1995; Song & Caruso, 1996; Shi, 2001; Lee, 2009). Thus, this study aims to find out how native English speaking teachers and Thai teachers of English differ in terms of their essay evaluation.

### **Related studies**

There have been a number of studies that investigate native and non-native teachers' differences on essay evaluation (Kobayashi, 1992; Connor-Linton, 1995; Shi, 2001; Lee, 2009). The two groups of teachers have both similarities and differences.

Kobayashi (1992) conducted a study in a Japanese context and investigated how native English speaking teachers and Japanese teachers of English at college level evaluate and edit ESL (English as a second language) compositions written by Japanese students. He found that non-native English speaking teachers were less strict than native English speaking teachers. Native English speaking teachers provided far more corrections and corrected errors more accurately than the non-native English speaking teachers, since non-native English speaking teachers left many errors uncorrected, such as articles, number, prepositions, and lexical items which occur in Japanese as loan words from English.

Connor-Linton (1995) also did a study on teachers' assessment between non-native and native English speaking teachers within a Japanese context. This study compared the evaluative

criteria which American ESL instructors and Japanese EFL instructors applied in rating ten compositions written by adult Japanese EFL students. The instructors rated quantitatively and then stated their reasons for their ratings of each composition. He found that Japanese teachers emphasized wider areas which are; content, word choice, and grammar whereas, American teachers tend to focused mainly on grammar. However, the results also showed that even though their scores were not different but their reasons were totally different. They focused on different areas which constitute strong or weak writing.

In addition, Song and Caruso (1996) investigated the degree to which differences exist in the rating of native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers. The results indicated that in holistic evaluation, native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers were significantly different. Native English speaking teachers assigned higher scores to all four essay samples. In holistic evaluation, native English speaking teachers seemed to give greater weight to the overall content and quality of the rhetorical features in the writing samples than they did to language use. They gave a greater weight on content and organization for 64%, whereas 36% was given to language use.

Shi (2001) conducted a study to investigate the differences in writing feedback given by non-native and native English speaking teachers in a Chinese context. Shi concluded that non-native and native English speaking teachers focused on different areas when they provided feedback on their students' essays. Non-native English speaking teachers were concerned with

length and organization. However, native English speaking teachers focused on content and language (intelligibility).

Lee (2009), claimed that Native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers' responses to students' essays are quite different. Non-native English speaking teachers are stricter in evaluating grammar, sentence structure and organization, whereas native English speaking teachers tend to focus on content and overall meaning.

Moreover, Wood (1993) and McNamara (1996) state that there are a lot of variables involved in rating an essay, such as the neatness of handwriting. Similarly, different perspectives can be based on several factors such as the style of evaluating, personal characteristics, rating experience and educational background (Lumely & McNara 1995; Weigle, 1998). Khongput (2010) states that the teachers seem not to have biases while they mark writing. Most of the teachers reported that the scores they give are not affected by the quality of students' handwriting. In contrast, Wood (1993) state that students' handwriting may cause bias in evaluating essays.

Certain conclusion can, be taken from the above studies. Firstly, it can be seen that there are differences between non-native and native English speaking teachers' evaluation on students' writing. Song and Caruso (1996) and Shi (2001) found that native English speaking teachers tend to focus more on content than other criteria. Second, Kobayashi (1992) found that native English speaking teachers tend to be stricter when they evaluate students' essay. On the other hand, Lee (2009) found that non-native English speaking teachers were stricter when they evaluate students' essays. Moreover, Connor-Linton (1995) found that the scores given by both groups of

teachers was not significant different. Additionally, students' hand writing is a variable which could affect teachers' evaluation (Wood, 1993; McNamara, 1996; Khongput, 2010). Lastly, the reasons that teachers evaluate students' essays differently may come from difference of backgrounds, the style of evaluating, personal characteristics and rating experience which lead to different perspectives towards what constitutes a good writing (Khongput, 2010; Lumely & McNara1995; Weigle, 1998).



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to explore the differences between Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' evaluation on university students' English essays. It also explores their reasons behind their scoring. In this chapter, the researcher will present the methodological design of this study which includes research design, participants, research instruments, data collection and data analysis.

#### 1. Research design

This research is a mixed method study aiming to investigate the differences between Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' evaluation on students' argumentative essays and to find out the reasons behind their scoring. The study was conducted in the Thai EFL context. In the study, the scores from an evaluation of both groups of teachers were compared to find out whether there were any significant differences between the scores given by these two groups of teachers. The data from an evaluation form and a semi-structured interview were analyzed in order to find out whether both groups of teachers have similar reasons behind the essays scoring.

This research has two research questions which are 1) Are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers different when they evaluate the students' essays? and 2) What

are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' reasons behind the essay scoring?

## **2. Participants**

The participants of this study were six English teachers at Srinakharinwirot University. They were separated into two groups, i.e., three Thai teachers of English and three native English speaking teachers. Both groups of participants were recruited through purposive sampling. First, both group of teachers are qualified as tertiary level teachers and they all teach English writing. Second, they hold a doctoral degree and a teaching certificate. Third, native English speaking teachers were from the inner circle of Kachru's classification of English (Kachru, 1985). The three native English speaking teachers are British, American and Australian.

## **3. Research Instruments**

The research instruments included an evaluation form and a semi-structured interview.

### **3.1 An evaluation form**

The participants were asked to evaluate students' essays by giving a score on a 10-point scale and to provide comments for each essay. The evaluation form in this study is adapted from Shi (2001). An evaluation form can be seen in appendix A.

### **3.2 A semi-structured interview**

The interview was a semi-structured interview. Each participant was requested to answer the questions on three areas which were weight, scoring criteria and hand writing (Lee, 2009). The objective of the interview is to obtain information from the participants about the reasons behind their evaluation. The questions in the interview can be seen the appendix B.

## **4. Data Collection**

Both groups of teachers were given 10 of argumentative essays written by English-major undergraduates. The participants were asked to evaluate the students' essays by using a 10-point scale for scoring and to provide comments for their evaluation. After the two groups of teachers finished scoring the essays, they were each interviewed. They were required to explain the reason behind their scoring.

The quantitative data was collected in response to the first research question:

- 1) Are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers different when they evaluate the students' essays?

The qualitative data were collected in response to the second research question

- 2) What are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' reasons behind the essay scoring?

To answer the first research question, each participant received the same argumentative essays and marked it on a holistic score 1 to 10. Each teacher set their own marking criteria. No criteria were provided with the purpose of finding out how Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers defined the criteria themselves (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1996; Shi, 2001).

To answer the second research question, each participant provided comments for each essay. After the evaluation was completed, the participants were interviewed individually. The interview questions based on three areas which are weight, scoring criteria and hand writing.

## **5. Data Analysis**

In order to investigate whether there are any differences between Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers when they evaluate students' essays, the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed as follows:

### **1. Comparison of scores**

The scores from argumentative essays evaluation of Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers were analyzed for means and standard deviations. The means and standard deviations of the scores were used to indicate whether there were any differences between the scores given by the two groups of teachers.

## 2. Qualitative data

The data from the evaluation form (teacher's comments) and the data from a semi-structured interview were analyzed via content analysis in order to find out whether the participants had similar reasons behind the essay scoring. Descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency) were applied to analyze the comments. In addition, comments from both groups of teachers were categorized to five major areas: overall perception, content, organization, language and length (Shi, 2001). Finally, the data from the interview were transcribed from tape recording. After that, the data were grouped into themes.

In conclusion, this study is a mixed method which aimed to investigate the differences between Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' evaluation on students' argumentative essays and to find out the reasons behind their scoring. Quantitative will be collected through an evaluation form and qualitative data will be collected through an evaluation form and an interview. After that the data will be analyzed for the results of this study.

In the next chapter, the findings of the research will be presented according to the research questions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are presented according to the two research questions.

**Research Question 1:** *Are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers different when they evaluate the students' essays?*

**Table 1**

The raw scores given by native English teachers and Thai teachers of English

Essays	Native			Non-native		
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
1	6	7.5	6	6.5	3	5
2	5	5	7	6	4	4.5
3	8	8	6	7.5	5	7
4	8	6.5	6	6	5	4
5	5	8	5	7.5	3	3
6	5	6.5	8	7.5	5	5
7	7	9	6	9	6	6
8	6	5.5	4	4	6	6.5
9	6	6	6	7	6	4.5
10	7	6.5	6	7	5	4.5

Table 1 shows the scores given by native speakers of English teachers and Thai teachers of English on the ten essays. The highest score given was 9 and the lowest score was 3. However, we cannot really detect any differences from the raw scores from both groups. Hence, Table 2 presents the means scores and standard deviations of each essay.

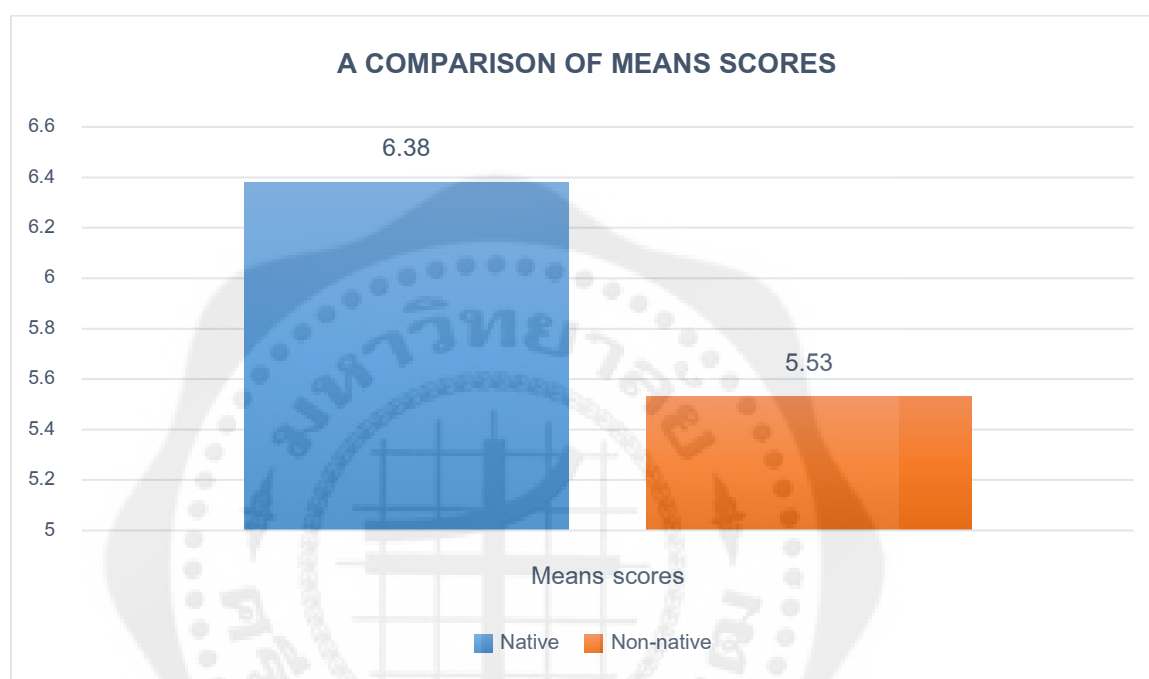
**Table 2**

A comparison of the means scores and standard deviations derived from native speakers of English teachers and Thai teachers of English

Essay	Native		Non-native	
	M	SD	M	SD
1	6.50	0.87	4.83	1.76
2	5.67	1.15	4.83	1.04
3	7.33	1.15	6.50	1.32
4	6.83	1.04	5.00	1.00
5	6.00	1.73	4.50	2.60
6	6.50	1.50	5.83	1.44
7	7.33	1.53	7.00	1.73
8	5.17	1.04	5.50	1.32
9	6.00	0.00	5.83	1.26
10	6.50	0.50	5.50	1.32
<b>Total</b>	6.38	1.05	5.53	1.48

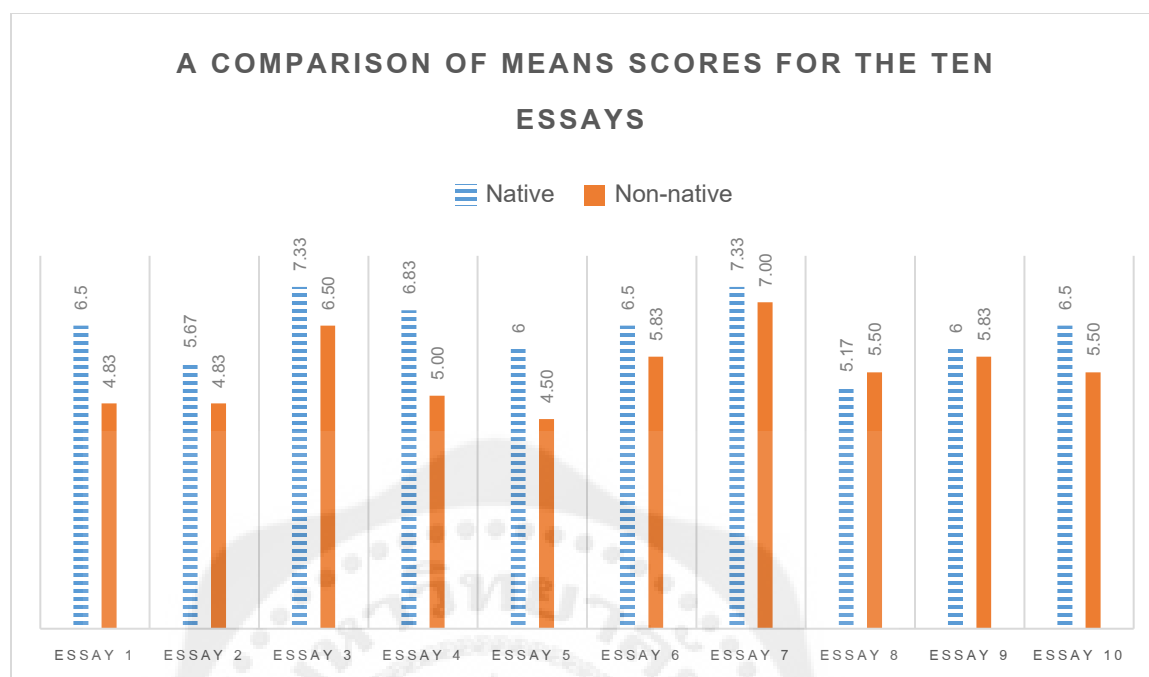
*Note:* M = Mean, SD = Standard deviation

As shown in Table 2, the average means scores and standard deviations of native English speaking teachers and Thai teachers of English were slightly different. The differences of means scores between both groups of teachers was only 0.85.



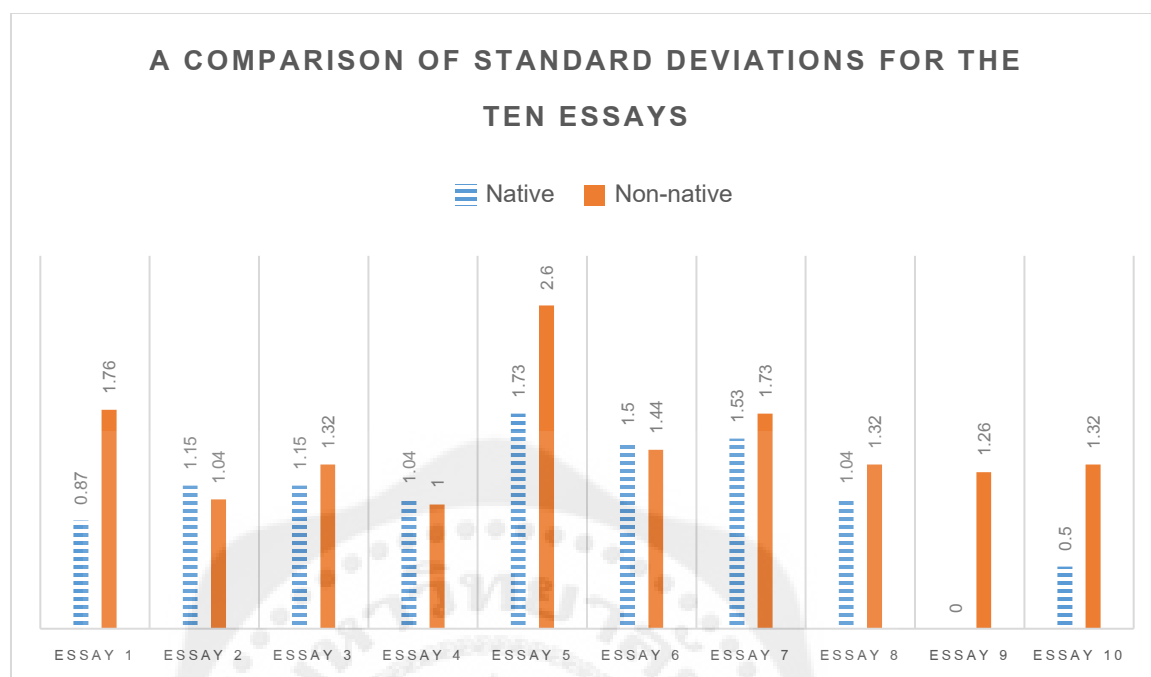
**Figure 3** A comparison of means scores

The average means scores of native English speaking teachers was 6.38, whereas the average mean score of non-native English speaking teachers was 5.53. It can be seen that the average mean score of native English speaking teachers was slightly higher than Thai teachers of English.



**Figure 4** A comparison of means scores for the ten essays

Figure 4 showed a comparison of means scores for the ten essays. It suggests that native English speaking teachers provided higher scores when compared with Thai teachers of English in 9 out of 10 essays. However, Thai teachers of English provided slightly higher scores on Essay 8 which was 5.50, as compared to 5.17 of that of native English speaking teachers.



**Figure 5** A comparison of standard deviations for the ten essays

According to Figure 5, the findings showed that standard deviations of the scores given by both groups of teachers was different. The highest standard deviations of the scores given by native English speaking teachers was 1.73, while the lowest was 0. In contrast, the highest standard deviations of the scores given by non-native English speaking teachers was 2.6, while the lowest was 1. It can be seen that both groups of teachers provided different scores on each essay.

**Research Question 2:** *What are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' reasons behind the essays scoring?*

**Table 3**

The frequency of comments based on 5 major categories

	Native	Non-native
Major categories	Frequency	
Overall perception	2	15
Content	29	15
Organization	18	17
Language	27	22
Length	0	3

The comments made by native and non-native English speaking teachers on 10 argumentative essays were counted for the frequency. The highest frequency of native English speaking teachers' comments on essays was content and the lowest was general. However, there were no comments on the length of essay. On the other hand, the highest frequency of non-native English speaking teachers' comments on essays was about language, whereas the lowest was length.

**Table 4**

The examples of comments based 5 major categories

<b>Major categories</b>	<b>Examples of comments</b>
<b>Overall perception</b>	Easy to understand
	Hard to understand
	Poor writing
	Overall, rather unclear
<b>Content</b>	Content is not too bad.
	Not logical
	Illogical
	Several points of the argument do not make sense.
	The argument isn't really explained.
	Good points -good argument
<b>Organization</b>	Good organization
	Organization is good.
	Very clear organization
	No topic
	No paragraph
<b>Language</b>	Poor grammar

**Table 4** (Continue)

The examples of comments based 5 major categories

	Conjunction
	Grammatical errors
	Capitalization
<b>Length</b>	Short discussion
	Too short
	Short

Table 4 shows the examples of comments based five major categories which are overall perception, content, organization, language and length (Shi, 2001). The results show that there were both positive and negative comments from both groups of teachers on all five categories.

When we looked at both groups' comments, organization was identified more often as a positive feature by both groups of teachers, whereas language showed the reverse pattern where both groups identified it more as a negative feature on students' essays. In addition, native English speaking teachers did not provide positive comments on length and overall perception but yet they did on content, organization and grammar. However, Thai teachers of English did not provide any positive comments on grammar and length, but they did react positively to organization, content and overall perception respectively. Such findings suggest that both groups

of teachers seem to make different comments on different categories. For example, native English speaking teachers provided “very clear organization” and illogical at times, whereas non-native English speaking teachers provided “good organization and grammatical errors.

### **Semi-structured interview results**

The interview questions included three areas which are scoring weight, scoring criteria and hand writing (Lee, 2009).

#### **Scoring weight**

At first, the participants were asked whether they gave equal weight to each criterion. The results show that the interviewees from both groups did not give equal weight to each criteria that they set for evaluating argumentative essays.

#### **Scoring criteria**

**Table 5**

Scoring criteria (Question 1)

<b>Participants</b>	<b>What criterion do you employ when you evaluate 10 argumentative essays?</b>
<b>Native 1</b>	<b>Content</b> , Language, Organization
<b>Native 2</b>	<b>Content</b> , Organization
<b>Native 3</b>	<b>Content</b> , Organization

**Table 5** (Continue)

Scoring criteria (Question 1)

<b>Non-native 1</b>	<b>Content</b> , Grammar, Organization
<b>Non-native 2</b>	<b>Content</b> , Grammar
<b>Non-native 3</b>	<b>Content</b> , Grammar

Table 5 shows the criteria which each participant employed when they evaluated ten argumentative essays. It seems that both groups of teachers focused on content. However, all three native English speaking teachers focused organization, while all Thai teachers of English focused on grammar.

**Table 6**

Scoring criteria (Question 2)

<b>Participants</b>	<b>The most crucial criteria</b>
<b>Native 1</b>	Content
<b>Native 2</b>	Content
<b>Native 3</b>	Content
<b>Non-native 1</b>	Content

**Table 6** (Continue)

Scoring criteria (Question 2)

<b>Non-native 2</b>	Grammar
<b>Non-native 3</b>	Content

As shown in table 6, the most important criterion for evaluating argumentative essays seem to be content. 5 out of 6 participants indicated that content was the most important criterion.

Scoring criteria (Question 3): the most difficult criterion to evaluate

5 out of 6 participants indicated that the criterion that is the most difficult to evaluate is content. They all indicated that it took them more time to evaluate this criterion.

**Table 7**

Scoring criteria (Question 4)

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Which one is more important between grammar and content?</b>
<b>Native 1</b>	Content
<b>Native 2</b>	Grammar
<b>Native 3</b>	Content
<b>Non-native 1</b>	Content

**Table 7** (Continue)

Scoring criteria (Question 4)

<b>Non-native 2</b>	Both are important
<b>Non-native 3</b>	Content

According to Table 7, 4 put of 6 agreed that content was more important than grammar. However, only one native English speaking teachers held grammar as more important than content. In addition, one Thai teachers of English stated that both content and grammar equally important.

**Table 8**

Scoring criteria (Question 5)

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Do you correct everything that ungrammatical, unacceptable or unnatural?</b>
<b>Native 1</b>	No
<b>Native 2</b>	No
<b>Native 3</b>	No
<b>Non-native 1</b>	No
<b>Non-native 2</b>	No
<b>Non-native 3</b>	No

According to Table 8, it can be seen that all of them did not correct everything that was ungrammatical, unacceptable or unnatural.

### **Handwriting**

The results show that the quality of students' handwriting does not affect their evaluation. All participants did not take handwriting into their decision for evaluation.

In conclusion, the findings showed that native and non-native English speaking teachers were different to a certain degree when they evaluated students' essays. The scores they gave were slightly different. When it came to their reasons behind essay scoring, the results showed that despite their differences in evaluating, there were parts where both groups of teacher were similar, i.e., they did not take students' handwriting into account when they evaluated essays and they did not correct everything that was ungrammatical, unacceptable or unnatural.

To understand the research findings, the discussion of major findings is presented in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the chapter is to discuss how the two research questions have been answered and to discuss the implications of these findings. Based on the findings, recommendations for English language teaching are offered as a way to better understanding in native and non-native English speaking teachers. It concludes with a consideration of the limitations of the study and some suggestions for further studies.

#### **Summary of the Findings**

The answers to the two research questions are presented below.

**Research question 1: Are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers different when they evaluate the students' essays?**

The study revealed that Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers was slightly different when they evaluated the students' essays. The findings indicated that the mean scores and standard deviation of both groups of teachers was different. The mean scores showed that Thai teachers of English gave lower scores on students' essays which is 5.53, whereas the mean scores of native English speaking teachers was 6.38. In addition, the SD of both groups indicated that non-native English speaking teachers provided different scores on

students' essays. Despite this, native English speaking teachers seem to provide a wider range of scores on students' essays which the lowest score was 3 and the highest score was 9.

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that in quantitative terms, both groups of teachers were slightly different when they evaluate students' essays. Such finding appears to resemble the study of Song and Caruso (1996) which also found native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers were different when they score students' essays.

**Researcher Question 2: What are Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers' reasons behind the essays scoring?**

The analysis of the qualitative comments suggests that Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers had different reasons behind the scoring. They provided different comments on essays. The comments given by both groups of teachers were both positive and negative. The scores given by Thai teachers of English was lower and they seemed to provide more negative comments on language, especially on grammar. However, they did provide positive comments on organization. In contrast, native English speaking teachers gave higher scores but they did provide more positive comments on language. In addition, native English speaking teachers provided more negative comments on content such as illogical, poor logic, bad points and untrue statement.

It can be concluded that non-native English speaking teachers viewed grammar as a weakness of the students, whereas native English speaking teachers viewed content as a weakness of the students. From the findings of this study, it can be argued that native and non-

native English speaking teachers reacted differently when they provided comments on students' essays. According to Lee (2009), native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers' reactions to students' on essays are quite different. Non-native English speaking teachers are stricter in evaluating grammar, sentence structure and organization, whereas native English speaking teachers tend to focus on content and overall features.

Moreover, the findings appear to reflect the statement made by Shi (2001), i.e., non-native and native English speaking teachers focused on different areas when they provided feedback on their students' essays. Native English speaking teachers focused on content and language (intelligibility).

The analysis of the data from the interview suggests that native English speaking teachers focused on content and organization, while Thai teachers of English focused on content and grammar. Nevertheless, most teachers have agreed that content was the most important criterion and it was found that content was the most difficult criterion when evaluating students' essays.

Furthermore, all participants reported that the quality of students' hand writing did not affect their evaluation. As Khongput (2010) states, the teachers seem not to have biases while they mark writing, i.e., the scores they give are not affected by the quality of students' handwriting.

Interestingly, there is only a slight difference in the scores given by both groups of teachers. The interview has shown that all the participants focused on content. However, the comments they provided are different. It can be seen that both groups of teachers have focused on the same criteria but their reasons behind scoring was not the same.

## **Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Further Studies**

Like all other research, this work is open to improvement in several ways. Some of which are considered here:

1. The number of participants in this study were limited. There were only six teachers who participated in this study. Since the number of participants involved in the study was quite small, it would be inaccurate to claim that the results can be generalized to other populations outside this context. The results obtained in this study need to be substantiated by further research with a wider range of participants.

2. The essays used in this study was only university students' essays. Hence, a study of different levels of students is encouraged. Future studies may focus on different levels such as high school level essays to confirm the results of the study.

3. Further studies should include a questionnaire in order to gain more information that could not be found from an evaluation form and an interview. It is possible that participants have different perspectives on their evaluation. Further studies may use the information from a questionnaire to support the results of the study.

4. A well-prepared time frame is highly recommended. The participants in this study are full-time teachers and they all have a pretty tight schedule. It was not easy to make an appointment for a face to face interview. Therefore, an individual interview took longer time to complete. In addition, they all spent more time than expected in evaluating the 10 essays. Further studies need to carefully calculate the time for these matters.

## **Understanding native and non-native English speaking teachers**

The differences between both sets of quantitative and qualitative data could not have been more stark. Even though both groups of teachers focused on the same criteria, their reasons behind the scoring was different. Undoubtedly, therefore, this raise an important issue when it comes to teaching writing. How do we ensure parity when grading students' writing in a setting involving multi-culture and lingual invigilators?

A potential solution to this realization was put forward by Kobayashi and Rinnert in 1996 and Shi in 2001. They proposed that Native English speaking teachers in English as a foreign language context should concern about the needs of local students to meet the standards of non-native English speaking teachers. Both groups of teacher should cooperate with each other in order to make students' writing meet their standards. Since writing is considered as an important skill, particularly in an academically-oriented context, both groups of teachers should cooperate with each other in guiding the students to write a well-argued essay because writing is considered as an important skill particularly in an academically-oriented context (Ur, 1996). Indeed, it is clear to see that the melding together of scoring criteria of native and non-native English speaking teachers would, indeed, create a tight modern and accurate guide on how writing should be evaluated. Therefore, the cooperation between two groups of teachers could lead to more effective teaching writing for students in Thailand.

It is hoped the findings drawn from the study have provided a better understanding of how native English speaking teachers and Thai teachers of English evaluated their students' essays.





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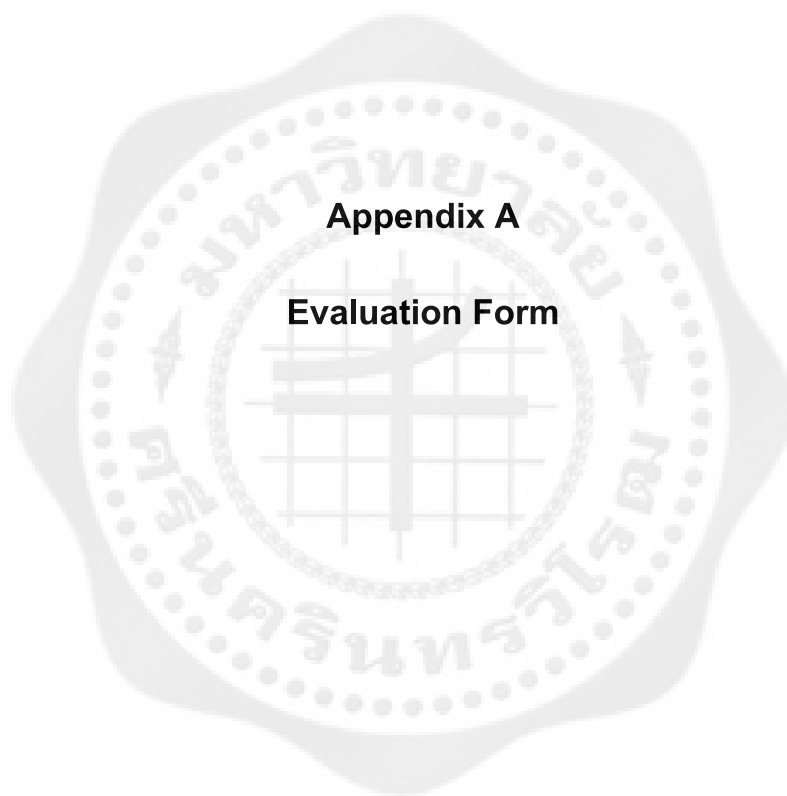
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**APPENDICES**



**Appendix A**

**Evaluation Form**

## Evaluation Form

Your cooperation in completing this evaluation form is highly appreciated. The information you provide will be kept in strict confidentiality.

**Instructions:** Please fill in the gaps for your profile. Please assess students' essays by giving a score on 10-point scale and state three reasons in order of the importance of criteria. Where 10 is the highest and 1 is the lowest.

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Lastname \_\_\_\_\_

2. Educational background:

Your degree \_\_\_\_\_

Your major \_\_\_\_\_

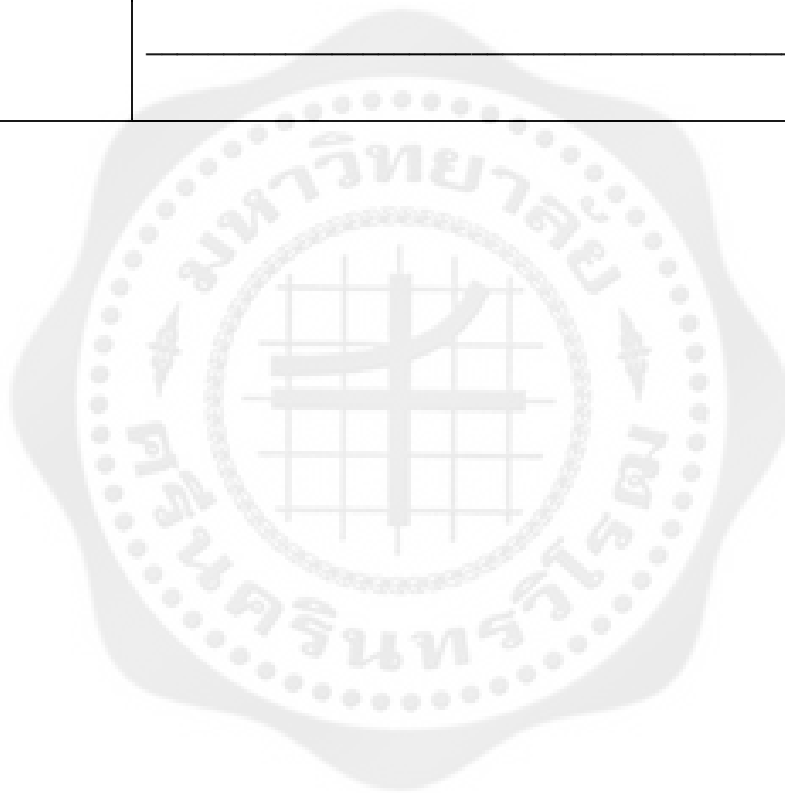
3. Years of English teaching experiences \_\_\_\_\_

Writing no.	Score	Comments
1		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
2		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
3		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Writing no.	Score	Comments
4		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
5		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
6		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Writing no.	Score	Comments
7		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
8		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
9		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Writing no.	Score	Comments
10		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>





**Appendix B**

**Interview questions**

**Part 2: Semi-structured interview questions**

Please answer below questions. The information you provide in the interview will be kept in strict confidentiality.

The questions included three areas which are scoring weight, scoring criteria and hand writing.

**A. Scoring weight**

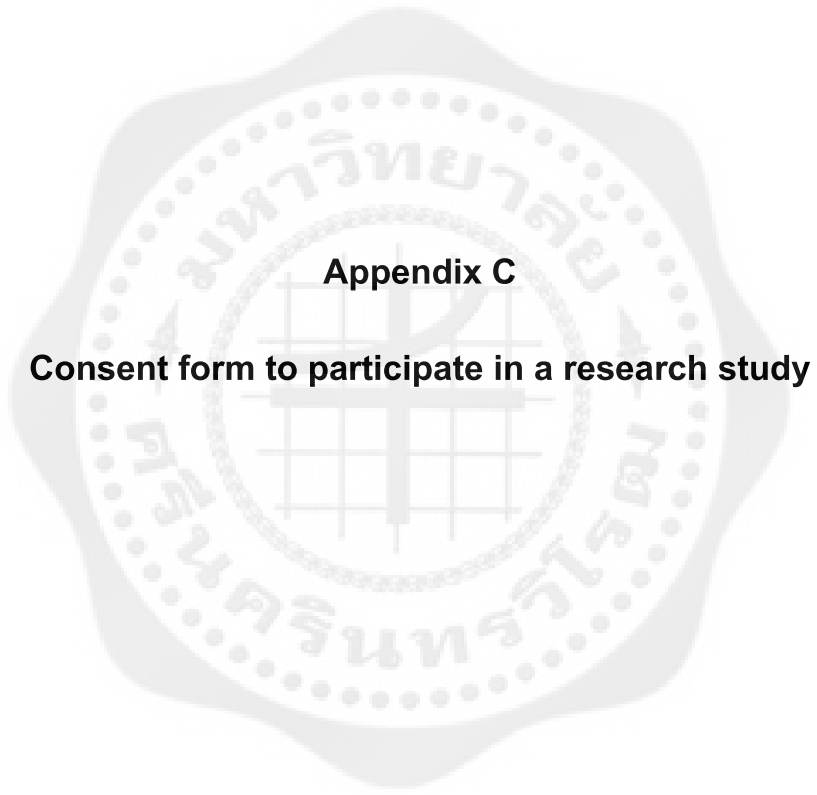
- Do you give equal weight to each criterion?

**B. Scoring criteria**

- What criterion do you employ when you evaluate 10 argumentative essays?
- What is the most/least crucial criterion?
- Which criterion is the most difficult/easiest in grading argumentative essays?
- Which one is more important between grammar and content?
- Do you correct everything that ungrammatical, unacceptable and unnatural?

**C. Handwriting**

- Does the quality of students' handwriting affect your evaluation?



**Appendix C**

**Consent form to participate in a research study**

## **CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

This research study is being conducted by Pitchaya Chummueangyen. The title of this research study is “An Evaluation of Thai University Students’ Argumentative Essays by Thai Teachers of English and Native English Speaking Teachers”. The purposes of this study are 1) to investigate the differences between Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers’ evaluation on students’ English essays and 2) to explore Thai teachers of English and native English speaking teachers’ reasons behind the essay scoring.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to evaluate 10 students’ argumentative essays by using a 10-point scale for scoring and to provide comments for your evaluation. After you have finished scoring the 10 argumentative essays, you will be interviewed and required to explain the reason behind your scoring. Your cooperation to participate in this study will be highly appreciated.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The information you provide will be kept in strict confidentiality and will not be released to any other party for any reason. Identifying information such as your name will not be revealed or

appeared in the study. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. The information you provide will be destroyed in 3 months after the data collection has been completed.

## **SIGNATURES**

I have read this consent form and my questions have been answered. My signature below means that I do want to participate in the study. I know that I can remove myself from the study at any time without any problems.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**VITAE**

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- 
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- 2011 Bachelor of Arts Degree in Home and Community  
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