

A STUDY OF WRITING PROBLEMS OF GRADE 10 STUDENTS AT
CHOMSUR ANG UPATHAM SCHOOL, AYUTTHAYA



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

May 2014

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This study explored English writing problems of grade 10 students. The participants of the study were 100 grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School in Ayutthaya province. The instruments used for collecting data were questionnaires and interviews. All 100 students were given a questionnaire and 20 of them were interviewed.

The results of the study revealed that the students thought that the most difficulty in their writing was using vocabulary correctly. However, the students' most frequent problems were related to grammar and syntax.

As for the needs to improve their writing skill, the students needed to take a course on sentence structure. Thus, it is concluded that the students had various writing problems, and that they need to improve their vocabulary, grammar and syntax.

การศึกษาปัญหาในการเขียนของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 4 โรงเรียนจอมสุรางค์อุปถัมภ์
จังหวัดพระนครศรีอยุธยา



เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
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งานวิจัยครั้งนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาปัญหาในการเขียนของนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 4 กลุ่มตัวอย่างของงานวิจัยคือนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 4 โรงเรียนจอมสุรางค์อุปถัมภ์ จังหวัดพระนครศรีอยุธยา จำนวน 100 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลคือ แบบสอบถามและสัมภาษณ์ กลุ่มตัวอย่างทั้ง 100 คนทำแบบสอบถามและ 20 คนจากกลุ่มตัวอย่างทั้งหมดได้รับการสัมภาษณ์ ผลจากการศึกษาพบว่านักเรียนคิดว่า การใช้คำศัพท์ให้ถูกต้อง เป็นสิ่งที่ยากที่สุดในการเขียน อย่างไรก็ตามปัญหาในการเขียนที่พบบ่อยที่สุดในงานเขียนของนักเรียนคือไวยากรณ์และวากยสัมพันธ์

ในแง่ของความต้องการพัฒนาทักษะการเขียน นักเรียนต้องการเรียนโครงสร้างประโยค ดังนั้นสามารถสรุปได้ว่านักเรียนมีปัญหาในการเขียนที่แตกต่างกัน และพวกเขาต้องการพัฒนา คำศัพท์ ไวยากรณ์และวากยสัมพันธ์



The master's project titled
"A Study of Writing Problems of Grade 10 Students at Chomsurang Upatham School,
Ayutthaya"

By
Leelapan Pompuang

has been approved by the Graduate School as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Master of Arts degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language of
Srinakharinwirot University.

..... Dean of Graduate School
(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Somchai Santiwatanakul)

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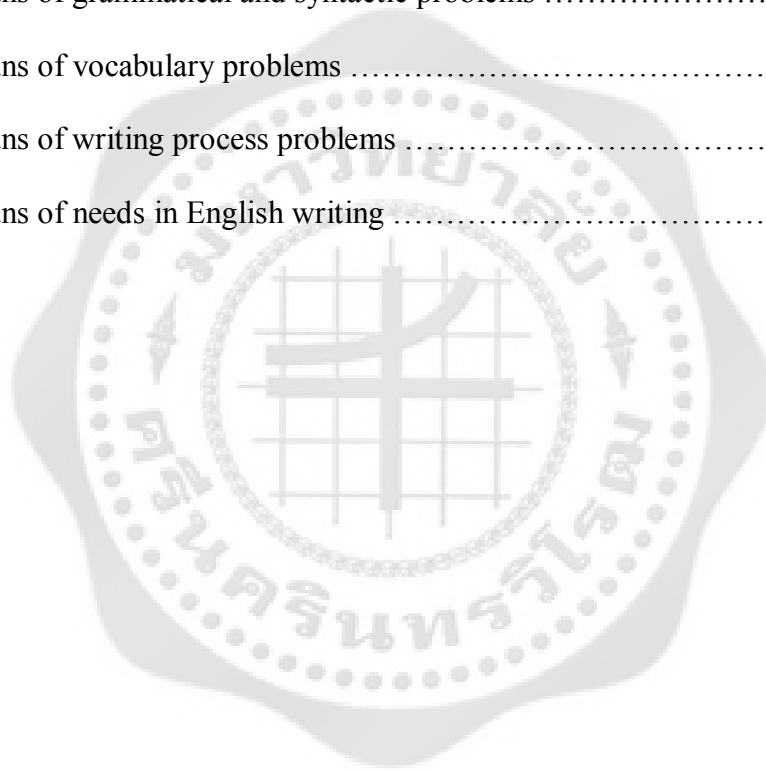
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

English is the most popular foreign language in Thailand as it is used in most jobs and is a compulsory subject in all schools and universities. Thai people communicate with foreigners using English. Yet, this language is becoming more important now that Thailand and other Asian countries have agreed to join the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) community in 2015 in order to enhance the economic power of its members. It is said that English will be the major medium of communication amongst the members of ASEAN. In relation to English education, the Ministry of Education has prepared Thailand to be one of ASEAN members by enhancing Thai people's English. One of the educational policies of the Ministry is to promote students' English language proficiency communicative skills in order to ensure that Thailand is ready for the new coming challenge (Ministry of Education, 2012). English proficiency includes four basic skills in English language teaching: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing, a productive skill, is used by learners as a means to communicate with other people. It is certainly a very important skill, for it is used for a variety of purposes. All English curriculums of the Ministry of Education state that students must be able to write. For example, at grade nine students must be able to summarize texts and write to exchange ideas (Ministry of Education, 2008). Writing must also be part of communication. Weigle (2002) points out that teaching writing in a communicative way is crucial and also that students must be able to write their notes and letters to family members, friends, and relatives in everyday life. In schools, students are

assigned to write paragraphs and essays based on their topics of interest. The writing ability is considered to be an essential tool because it is a means to develop overall English abilities, specifically in term of vocabulary and grammar knowledge that students will use later (Reichelt, 2005). Furthermore, abilities to write well give learners more chances to further their study or to get better jobs.

However, writing is always regarded as a very complex process, involving cognitive skills such as brainstorming, planning, outlining, organizing, drafting, revising and so forth (Flower & Hayes, 1981), so it is difficult for a person, native or non-native, to become a good writer. No doubt, for ESL (English as a second language) or EFL (English as a foreigner) learners, writing tasks are not easy. When given a writing assignment, students have many elements to be concerned about: content and ideas, organization, vocabulary, linguistic knowledge, and mechanics. For non-native speakers of English, writing is more difficult due to several factors, such as mother tongue interference, the complexity of the writing process, and some other characteristics of written language (Nunan, 1991). Benson and Heidish (1995) explain that students have limited knowledge of the target language and thus they produce uncountable errors. To sum up, students, native or non-native, always struggle to transform their thoughts into words and put them logically on paper.

To systematically study the writing problems of Thai students, we should classify the problems. They may be grouped into grammatical or syntactic problems, vocabulary problems, discourse problems, cultural problems, and problems related to the writing process and teaching methods. All these problems are supposedly interrelated and should be identified before a teaching plan is made. The study could be a survey.

But before a survey of the students' problems, one should also study types of problems a group of students have from previous studies. This information will be useful

for writing a questionnaire. To start with, Jenwitheesuk (2009) identified four most frequent errors: determiners, subject-verb agreement, tenses, and prepositions respectively. Thep-ackrapong (2005) says that the most found grammatical errors in written English influenced by Thai sentence structures are related to subject-verb agreement and passive voice. These are typical problems, but to look at a wider scale, problems can arise from using words, phrases, clauses, and sentences incorrectly. Students misspell words, or use wrong parts of speech, wrong word choices, wrong tenses, and so on. They order words incorrectly, ignore rules, and use wrong modifiers. They do not know how to put clauses together.

Syntactic errors are due to three important causes. First, students have limited knowledge of the target language. Second, the difficulty of the second language certainly causes errors. Abdulsata (2000) states that errors are always found in the written products of Thai students whose mother tongue is extremely different from the target language, such as English. Similarly, Lado (1961) states that differences between languages would cause difficulties for learners. Third, learner's behavior causes errors. Some students translate Thai into English word by word, without considering how English is actually used.

Mother tongue interference is one important cause of syntactic problems. Bhela (1999) states that second language learners cannot apply their L2 knowledge of structural entities into coherent writing because they tend to rely on their first language structure to produce their work.

ESL/EFL students also have vocabulary problems. Wilkins (1972) says that "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed. Without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed" (p. 111). Some EFL writers cannot write well because they are not lexically competent. Problems about syntax and vocabulary are usually fused together, making

students unable to write (Olsen, 1999). A common problem of Thai students, in the researcher's experience, is that they lack vocabulary. They repeat words. They use words of lower grades. They heavily use concrete words. Their writing, as a result, is not interesting.

Problems about EFL students' writing, in addition, arise because students do not understand the nature of writing. They do not understand the situation of the writing. There are elements of writing: purpose, audience, clarity, unity, and coherence (Walker, n.d.). However, researches such as Wilson (2006) show that students can produce powerful writing if they add their emotions or reader concepts into their writing. Therefore, if students ignore these elements of writing, they cannot produce powerful writing. It is interesting to investigate if secondary school students think of these elements as they write.

Next, ESL and EFL learners do not have only difficulties related to the writing process and linguistic abilities, but also they encounter other difficulties. Benson and Heidish (1995) mention that there is always cultural interference due to the difference in thought patterns or rhetorical patterns of expression, saying that ESL/EFL learners generally write texts with not only grammatical but also rhetorical errors. In composition, researchers have observed that EFL learners usually present a written discourse that is different from that of native speakers. Kaplan (1966) presents a diagram which shows that writing is presented by Westerners in a straightforward manner; their writing usually starts from a main idea (topic sentence), while writing by Easterners goes round and round without clear starting and finishing points.

Finally, a common problem for ESL or EFL learners that the researcher has always noticed is the lack of ideas and inability to think of anything interesting or significant to write. Part of this inability is their lack of knowledge of the target language.

But it may also result from how English is taught. EFL students have a limited knowledge of the target language, which leads to an emphasis on language rather than on content (Weigle, 2002). If the teaching always goes in this manner, students will lack the content or ideas for writing. This is especially true of lower level students who have not acquired enough vocabulary or structure of the target language. Sometimes they are unmotivated to learn to write, which might be because writing tasks might not be presented to them step-by-step or the teaching strategies used in writing classes are ineffective and uninteresting.

Most grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School probably have all those problems mentioned above. They cannot communicate their ideas in writing. Their written tasks do not contain varied vocabularies, and they tend to use the same information, for example, patterns of personal information (e.g. My name is....; I come from...; my family is...). Most of them cannot write complete sentences, and they produce a lot of grammatical errors. In addition, they cannot write or form unified paragraphs. They lack creative ideas and interesting stories to tell. Their stories are simple and plain. The students also find it difficult to start a story.

It may be concluded that the students have various problems. The researcher explored all of their problems related to those areas. However, because the problems of students were complex and interrelated, the researcher decided to classify them into three groups: 1) grammar and syntax, 2) vocabulary and 3) the writing process. The researcher tried to discover the kinds of problems that grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School have most and least. The researcher also attempted to study the relationship of the problems. For example, the researcher wanted to know if it was the students' lack of vocabulary or ideas that they could not start writing. Apart from exploring the students' problems, the study surveyed what the students' need in order for them to write better.

The researcher hoped that the study, which would be conducted at the real location of the problems, would reveal right ways to solve the students' problems.

Significance of the Study

This study aimed to explore Thai students writing problems and to study their needs in learning and improving writing English. It was also hoped that the findings of this survey research will benefit teachers teaching English writing in secondary schools. The findings may make them perceive how to manage writing courses. In addition, as we know there is little research into the real act of secondary school students writing in English. Therefore, this research reveals what problems they have, what they need to improve their writing, and what teachers need to do to help them. In fact, in the researcher's experience, there is not much teaching of English writing at the secondary school level. As a result, this study provides useful information for secondary school teachers who teach English writing in particular and for those who teach English in general.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on the English writing problems of grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School. In one semester, all the students were asked to complete a questionnaire and also interviewed about their writing problems.

Participants

The population of this study were 100 students in grade 10 at Chomsurang Upatham School during the second semester of the academic year 2013. There were 441

students in this level. The questionnaires were distributed to 100 students and 20 out of them were interviewed.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To explore problems in English writing of grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School
2. To study the students' needs enhancing their English writing skills

Research Questions

1. What are the problems in English writing perceived by grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School?
2. What are the students' needs in learning and enhancing their English writing skills?

Definition of Terms

1. Writing Problems refer to problems of English writing of grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School which the students studied English based on the curriculum of the Ministry of Education in the academic year of 2013. The problems include grammar and syntax, vocabulary, and writing process. It could be measured by using part two of the questionnaire survey which obtained the information about their writing problems.

2. Needs in Learning and Enhancing English Writing Skill refers to the needs of grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School to improve their English writing. It

could be measured by using part three of the questionnaire survey which obtained the information about the students' needs in learning and enhancing their English writing skill.



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents a literature review related to the study, which is divided into four parts as follows:

1. Grammatical and Syntactic problems for EFL/ESL learners
2. Vocabulary problems for EFL/ESL learners
3. Writing process
4. Related research

1. Grammatical and Syntactic Problems for EFL Learners

In this study, the researcher defines grammatical problems as not following rules at the word level, such as “two fishes*” and “writting*” while syntactic problems as not conforming to rules for arranging words into grammatically correct sentences, such as “I am not go* with you.” Grammatical and syntactic problems or errors occur when the learner cannot conform to rules that govern the language. The need to conform to rules is particularly obvious when it comes to writing (Warren, 1985).

To study grammatical and syntactic problems, or errors, we can divide them into those at word, phrase, and clause levels. Students have many problems forming words, phrases, and clauses. For example, Ponvarin (2007) studied the errors of first-year graduate students in English Business Communication and found that the students made errors in the use of verbs (30.94%), sentence structure (30.06%), nouns (25.87%), adjectives and adverbs (8.92%), and pronouns (4.02%).

As the findings show, students can have problems in all areas of the language. Even the use of one word can be problematic. For example, the use of articles is very troublesome. A lot of Thai students have problems choosing between the definite article (the) and the indefinite articles (a, an). Nopjirapong (2011) studied errors of English articles committed by second-year English major students. She found that the highest frequency of article errors was the omission of “the” before nouns. From the kinds of error mentioned above, there is no doubt that grammatical and syntactic errors can be spotted everywhere in the writing of secondary school students.

According to Richard (1971, pp 173-178), 5 sources of errors are identified as causes of grammatical and syntactic errors which are as follows:

1. Mother tongue interference: Learners often write the target language in the form of their native language structures: both grammatical and stylistic. For example, the –s may be missing in their present tense verb that comes with a singular subject. It is because in their native language, this tool is not used.

2. Overgeneralization: Learners write the target language in aberrant structures based on the structures learned in the target language. For example, some learners may use “goed” instead of “went” because most past simple verbs end with –ed.

3. Ignorance of the rule restrictions: The rules are applied incorrectly in the context. For example, the verb following the verb “help” must be an infinitive, but a student may use other forms, such as “I helped him found* the book.” This happens because the student does not know this particular rule.

4. Incomplete application of rules: Learners apply incomplete structures in sentences. For example, for a yes-no question, the subject and the verb must be reversed. However, when a yes-no question is embedded in a longer sentence, there is no subject-verb reversion. Students may not know this rule and produce an error.

5. False concept hypothesized: Learners fail to entirely understand the rules and form false concepts. This may be the impact of deficiencies of teaching materials and sequences of lessons.

Understanding language principles and patterns plays an important role in language learning. Grammatical and syntactic understanding should come first in the sequence of EFL/ESL learning, and it should be emphasized during the practice and reinforced steps (Cheevasart, 2005).

2. Vocabulary problems for EFL/ESL learners

To write in the target language requires a lot of knowledge from learners. According to Tribble (1997), vocabulary knowledge is important for writing. Moreover, learners should not only have adequate vocabulary but also know how to use words appropriately.

Writing in a foreign language can be problematic for many language learners. They might have a problem when choosing words to use. Chinnawong (1999) reported on the ability in academic writing of students in the Science Faculty at Chulalongkorn University. The study shows that the students made many mistakes in vocabulary, such as spelling or word choice errors and mistakes.

Next, research shows that vocabulary problems are one of major errors in students' writing. Khao-Urai (2002) studied errors in English essays of fourth-year students at Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University. The major problems found were grammatical errors, syntactic errors, and lexical errors. The category of lexical errors included misspellings, literal translations from Thai to English, overgeneralizations, and use of general lexical items.

Next, Mongphet (2007) investigated the correctness of words chosen from Thai-English electronic dictionaries for writing. The researcher focused on how appropriately learners use vocabulary in terms of form, meaning, and use. The result showed that the learners who were asked to write in English by using Thai-English electronic dictionaries were not able to correctly produce word choices.

In short, we can see that there are many kinds of writing problems and vocabulary problem is one of them. If students have problems with vocabulary use, it affects their English writing to a big degree.

3. Writing process

Davis and Lovejoy (1993) explained that writing is a process which is not something happens all at once. Davis et al. also suggested that learning to write is a developmental process. They presented the writing process as having three stages. The first stage is predrafting. In this stage, the writers think about something before they begin the first draft such as thinking, taking notes, or even reading. For example, some of my students are assigned to read about the topic that they are going to write about to get more detail and then they begin to write. The second stage is drafting. Drafting involves putting ideas down in ways the writer thinks can convey the message to the reader appropriately or effectively. The third stage is post-drafting which includes rewriting, revising and editing. Most writers do these before they reach the final product.

In addition, Susser (1994) stated that process writing is characterized by the awareness of the writer of the writing process. It is focused on students' needs and it requires teacher and student interaction in writing. The students are expected to share information with each other while the teachers reflect in the last stage. Davis and

Lovejoy (1993) also stated that all writing occurs within a situation involving an audience, a purpose, and an occasion. As a result, every piece of writing is written by someone who is a writer and who in turn writes for someone that is called a reader.

Changlek (1999) also supported these ideas. He claimed that writing has its own aspects or nature depending on the purpose of communication between writers and readers. It may be concluded that every piece of written task has its own purpose to communicate with the readers. Moreover, writing is a form of communication between writers and readers so good writers should consider their readers' experiences, backgrounds, and knowledge for effective communication.

The writing process approach requires that students have greater responsibility and express the ownership of their own learning. Students are engaged in pre-writing, planning, drafting, and post-writing activities. Figure 1 shows the activities done in the writing process.

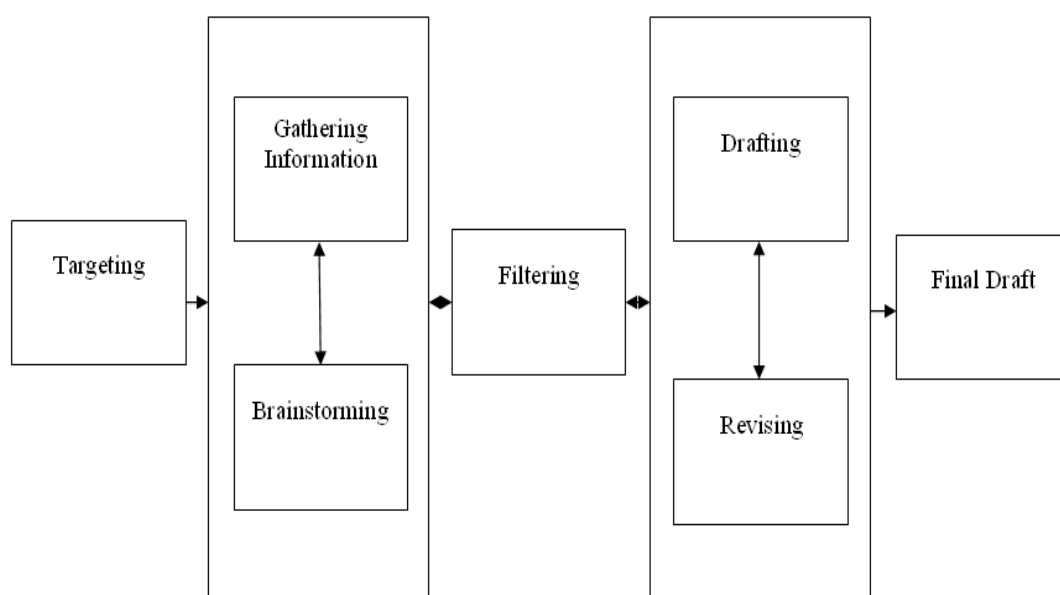


Figure 1 The Process of Writing

In order to promote learners to produce writing work in the right way, these steps of writing should be taught to them:

1. Targeting: Any writing work has to be done following certain objectives. If the purpose of writing is not clearly set, it is hard for writers to complete that work perfectly.

2. Gathering Information: Supporting ideas with outside sources of information is sometimes important. It is necessary for writers to know the kinds of supporting information and how to derive them before writing starts. As writing has a variety of purposes, supporting information has to come from various sources, too, and be carefully selected.

3. Brainstorming: This is another way for getting ideas (Hogue. 1996, p. 32). In this process, different ideas, whether they are appropriate for the topics or not, are allowed to come up freely. Every word, phrase, and idea relevant to the topic that comes up in the writers' minds is listed in this stage.

4. Filtering: In this step, writers decide which ideas collected in the brainstorming stage are to be kept or discarded. During this process, it is important to be aware of writing purpose and readers.

5. Drafting: Writers have to keep in mind that, in drafting step, it is not necessary for them to write perfectly, but it is essential that they write continuously. As revision has to be finally conducted, writers should not be concerned too much about grammar or mechanics when beginning drafting. Moreover, there is no need to early write introduction and conclusion. It is, however, more important to write a statement in short, simple declarative form.

6. Revising or editing: This step, writers edit the draft by going over it, correcting mistakes, and making change where necessary. Spelling, punctuation, and

mechanics are checked in this process (Mc Mahan, Day, and Funk, 1996. P. 31). Writers should check the tone of the paragraph after writing. Moreover, William and Dorothy (2001. P.10) suggested two useful strategies: Have other people comment on the draft and reread it a day or two later. In order to make the writing sound more smooth, writers may consider rewriting some sentences. Furthermore, rechecking the meaning and the mechanics should be done first by the editors and by their peers respectively.

7. Finalizing: The draft is rechecked in this step. However, it is not similar to revising as the language, the presentation, and the content are mainly focused on. Writers can decide whether some details of grammar, mechanics, and format are to be arranged and get them done until the submitting time.

Hadley (1993) also suggested that 3 stages of the writing process: prewriting, composing, and revision, are included as follows:

1. Prewriting: Before starting the first draft, writers have to consider what topics to write about, ideas relevant to the topics, who the audience are and the writing purpose.
2. Composing: Writers follow certain guidelines for writing, consider organizational and mechanical aspects.
3. Revision: Before finishing the writing tasks, writers consider deleting, adding words or information on the writing piece.

Many writing process problems have been investigated by many researchers. For example, Ling Yang (2008) conducted a contrastive study of the rhetorical organization of Chinese and American students' essays. The results showed that the students were unable to make a good organization in their writing without the steps of the writing process. Kim (2006)'s report also supported that writing process problems are found in EFL writing. For example, they are unable to make smooth changes and connections between sentences.

In Thailand, the inability to perform steps of the writing process is one writing problem. Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong (2008) studied errors in paragraph writing of first-year English students. The findings showed that most students did not provide a thoughtful and clear purpose in their writing. Moreover, they did not produce clear connections or relations between ideas in their paragraphs, so they produced incoherent prose. They did not use transitional words to link ideas together. The researchers also found that the sentences in the paragraphs did not directly relate to the main ideas.

Keawcha (2009) states that writing is the most difficult skill for Thai learners. In organization particularly, writers should create a well-organized introduction, well-supported content, and a conclusion that restates the thesis statement. The content should show the coherence of the whole paragraph.

4. Related Research

A number of related research studies on English writing problems were conducted. Manamuti (1998) studied major areas of problems in writing business letters faced by non-native English speakers. The results revealed that the factors affecting students' ability in writing business letters were positions, ages, educational backgrounds, general work experiences, and experience in business letter writing. The instrument used in the research was an open-ended interview questionnaire to elicit responses from 50 subjects. According to both the interview questionnaires and authentic sample letters, the findings also showed that mechanics was the major problem in writing business letters. In addition, the majority of the students recommended "read and practice more" to improve their letter writing skills.

Oranoot (2009) investigated the writing problems of students at Mahidol University International College in the second semester of the academic year 2008. The participants of this study consisted of students who could speak English fluently but could not pass the English Resources Skills course. The research instrument was a questionnaire. The results showed that the major problem on English writing of the majority of the students was grammar. Informal language was also found to be often used in students' essays. Moreover, the students stated that writing was the most difficult skill for them to learn.

To develop students' learning and to promote their English writing skills, needs analysis should be concerned. Nunan (1996, cited in Bowonrattapat, 2012) stated that needs analysis was a process used to collect data and information from learners. Bowonrattapat (2012) concluded that teachers could get good results in their teachings if suitable materials, activities, or learning styles for their students were well prepared.

Mongphet (2007) studied the needs and problems in business English writing of Thai staff members in an international organization based in Bangkok. A questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect information from the respondents, the Thai staff members. The findings demonstrated that most of the participants wrote simple and straightforward short sentences. They also lacked applying sentence connectors and coherence devices in their sentences. Most respondents mentioned that it was essential to analyze content and audience before writing. Furthermore, the answers from open-ended questions showed that their major problems in English writing were grammar and vocabulary.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the procedure of this survey research which aimed to investigate the problems of English writing of grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School, Ayutthaya. It contains information about the research design, participants, and research procedure.

Research Design

This research was a survey that involved giving out questionnaires and interviewing participants. The researcher started by talking with a focused group of grade 10 students about the problems they had while writing in English and what they wanted to do in order to improve their English writing. Then the researcher identified as well as anticipated the students' problems and needs. After that, the researcher constructed a questionnaire and interview questions, which were checked for validity by three specialists. The researcher then handed out copies of the questionnaire. The interviews were done later. The duration of collecting the data was 10 weeks in the second semester of the academic year 2013. The data from both sources were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach; that is, statistic and non-statistic findings were presented and discussed. Finally, a Master's report revealing the findings was written.

Participants

The participants of this study were 100 grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School in the first semester of the academic year 2013. There were 441

students in this level. The researcher selected the students of this level because the researcher had been teaching in this level and had found that the students had many English writing problems. The participants, 100 students out of the 441 students, were given a questionnaire asking about their writing problems and their needs in order for them to improve their writing.

Then 20 students out of all participants, selected via systematic sampling, were interviewed. The researcher listed the names of all participants and chose these students from numbers of equal intervals so that ten students would come from the Arts classes and another ten students from the Science classes. All the twenty students were divided into four focused groups and interviewed about their writing problems and needs for improving their writing.

Research Procedure

Research Instruments

The data for this study came from two sources: questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaire

The researcher constructed a questionnaire (Appendix A).

There were three parts. Part I sought for the background information concluding gender, age, educational background, experience, and opinion about English writing skills. The information obtained from this part became part of the general discussion about the students' problems and needs regarding their writing abilities.

Part II consisted of the interview questions. The participants were asked about their writing problems related to grammar and syntax, vocabulary, and the writing

process. There were both close-ended questions and open-ended questions. For the close-ended questions, the questionnaire adopted the five-point Likert scale for the participants to check the level of correctness of each statement. There were different sections in the questionnaire, and the descriptions for the five points were, for example, 5 = always, 4 = often, 3 = sometimes, 2 = seldom, and 1 = never. The open-ended questions tried to elicit information that the students were not asked for or might not be able to give in the first part. The data obtained would be more descriptive.

Part III surveyed the needs of the students to improve their English writing ability. The participants were asked questions about ways to improve their writing skills.

The questionnaires were validated both by the researcher and three invited specialists who are excellence in teaching English. The researcher wrote the questionnaire questions based on the objectives, research questions, literature review, and related studies. The questionnaire was revised from the recommendations of the three specialists, who had extended experience in constructing and employing questionnaires. Furthermore, it was approved by the research advisor. As a result, it is reasonable to state that the questionnaire was valid in terms of its content.

The questionnaire was used as the main instrument to collect data. It was given to 100 students. They were not asked to give their names in order for them to be honest about their writing problems and needs. The researcher tried to collect as many questionnaires as possible back.

Interview

To get deeper information about the students' writing problems, twenty participants were interviewed. The students were divided into four focused groups. The researcher interviewed each group, using the interview questions in Appendix B. The

interviews were in a relaxing atmosphere for the interviewees to feel comfortable and thus for them to express themselves freely. Lastly, because both the interviewer and interviewees were Thais, all interviews were conducted in Thai to prevent miscommunication.

Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher followed the steps below.

1. The researcher contacted the English teachers of 100 grade 10 students to ask for permission to collect data from their students. The researcher asked the teachers to urge the students to participate in the survey.

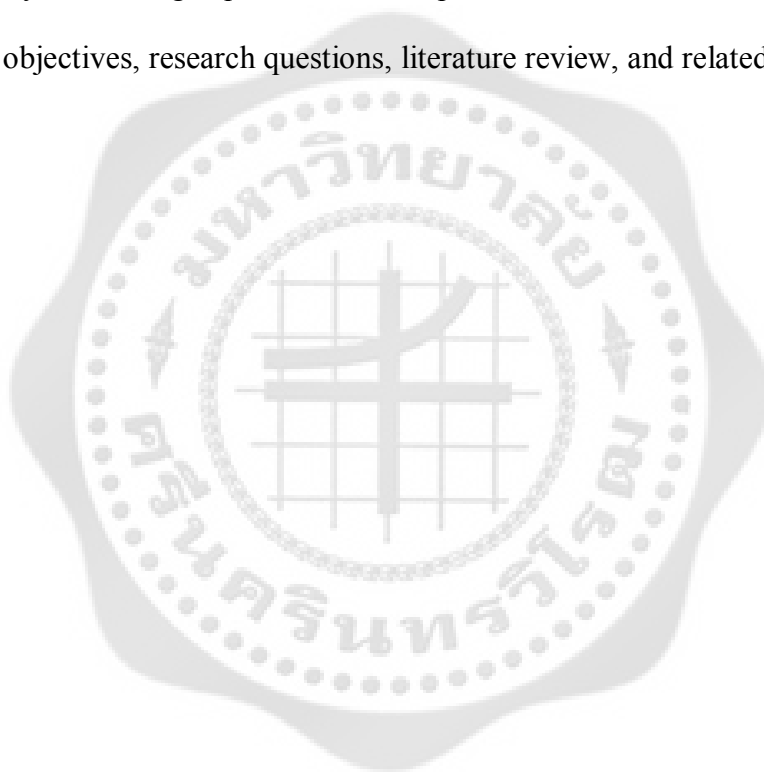
2. Then the researcher visited each class to give out the questionnaires and consent forms in Appendix C. The researcher explained the survey to them and asked them to join it. After one week, the researcher went back to the classroom to collect the questionnaires back. This step, giving out questionnaires and collecting them back from all classes, took 7-8 weeks.

3. After that, the researcher interviewed the twenty students. Each student signed a consent form. Five students were interviewed together in a focused group. While interviewing the students, the researcher asked the questions in Appendix D and some follow up questions. To get as much information as possible, the researcher encouraged all five students to speak and each interview sometimes lasted up to one hour. The interviews of the four focused groups were recorded and conducted in two weeks.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this study employed a mixed method approach. All data from the close-ended questions were quantified using statistical devices, such as frequency counts, percentages and means. Tables were used to present quantitative findings. All data from the open-ended questions were classified. The interviews were transcribed and classified. The data from these two sources were discussed qualitatively.

Finally, all findings, quantitative and qualitative, were described and discussed based on the objectives, research questions, literature review, and related studies.



CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to study the students' writing problems obtained from the questionnaires and interview. The analysis is reported using descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages and means based on the research objectives: 1) to explore problems in English writing of grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School and 2) to study the students' needs in learning and enhancing their English writing skills. The analysis was based upon the data obtained from the returned questionnaires and recorded interviews.

The results presented in this chapter are divided into four parts.

Part I: General information

Part II: Writing problems

Part III: Needs in English writing

Part IV: Interview answers

Part I: General Information

The participants of the study were 100 students in grade 10 at Chomsurang Upatham School in the second semester of the academic year 2013. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the general information about them.

Table 1

General information about the students

General Background Information	Percentage (%)
Total	100
1. Gender	
- male	0
- female	100
2. Number of the participants	
	100
3. How long they have been studying English	
- 1 - 5 years	-
- 6 – 10 years	89
- 11 – 15 years	11
4. Number of specific English writing courses that they have attended	
	0

All the participants who did the survey were female in grade 10. The table shows that 89 students had been studying English for 6 – 10 years, and 11 students had been studying English for 11 – 15 years. Moreover, none of the students had ever attended a specific English writing course.

Table 2 shows how the participants rated their writing skills.

Table 2

Self-evaluation for English writing skills

Writing skills	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)	Very Poor (1)	Total	X
a. Grammar and syntax	0	24	57	19	0	100	3.05
b. Vocabulary	0	16	59	25	0	100	2.91
c. Writing process	0	0	68	32	0	100	2.68
d. Sentence Structure	0	20	64	16	0	100	3.04
e. Understanding about the differences between complete and incomplete sentences	0	9	68	23	0	100	2.86

Table 2 illustrates that the students ($X = 3.05$) thought that grammar and syntax were the English writing skills they were best at, followed by sentence structure ($X = 3.04$), vocabulary ($X = 2.91$), their understanding about the differences between complete and incomplete sentences ($X = 2.86$), and their understanding about the writing process ($X = 2.68$). This means that on average the students thought that they were not as good at English.

Part II: The students' writing problems

This part shows the participants' problems related to grammar and syntactic problems, vocabulary problems, and problems about the writing process.

To present the participants' ratings of the statements in the questionnaire, which would allow the researcher to understand and discuss their problems, the researcher used the

Likert scaling technique to interpret all three kinds of problems. The participants were asked to rate the statements based on frequencies. “Always” was given a score of 5, “often” 4, “sometimes” 3, “seldom” 2, and “never” 0. Uneven mean scores are interpreted based on the value after the dot; if it was higher .50, it was counted as the above number. For example, 3.65 was valued as 4.0 (often).

Table 3 shows the frequencies, percentages, means, and interpretations related to students’ grammar and syntax problems.



Table 3

Means of grammatical and syntactic problems

Description	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Seldom (2)	Never (1)	Total	Mean	Opinions
1.1 I use appropriate word forms in my writing.	0	18	74	8	0	100	3.10	Sometimes
1.2 I use a variety of sentence structures.	0	18	68	14	0	100	3.04	Sometimes
1.3 I know the different types of phrase, clause, sentence, and capitalization.	0	14	73	13	0	100	3.01	Sometimes
1.4 I use appropriate punctuations.	5	30	58	7	0	100	3.33	Sometimes
1.5 I use a dictionary to find parts of speech.	26	39	31	4	0	100	3.87	Often
1.6 I write fragmented or incomplete sentences.	0	38	53	9	0	100	3.29	Sometimes
1.7 I use correct subject and verb agreements.	7	46	44	3	0	100	3.57	Often
1.8 I use correct prepositions.	4	44	48	4	0	100	3.48	Sometimes
1.9 I use correct pronoun references.	12	57	25	6	0	100	3.75	Often
1.10 I use correct tenses.	3	34	53	10	0	100	3.30	Sometimes

Item 1.1 shows that seventy-four of the students thought that they sometimes used appropriate word forms in their writing. Eighteen of the students thought that they often and eight of them thought they seldom use appropriate word forms in their writing.

Item 1.2 shows that sixty-eight of the students claimed that they sometimes used variety of sentence structures. Eighteen of the students thought that they often used variety of sentence structures and the rest fourteen of them thought they seldom used variety of sentence structures.

Item 1.3 shows that seventy-three of the students thought that they sometimes knew the different types of phrase, clause, sentence, and capitalization. Fourteen of the students thought that they often knew the different types of phrase, clause, sentence, and capitalization, and other thirteen students thought they seldom knew the different types of phrase, clause, sentence, and capitalization.

Item 1.4 shows that fifty-eight of the students thought that they sometimes used appropriate punctuations. Thirty of the students thought that they often used appropriate punctuations while seven of them thought they seldom used appropriate punctuations and five of the students thought they always use appropriate punctuations.

Item 1.5 shows that thirty-nine of the students claimed that they often used a dictionary to find parts of speech. Thirty-one of the students thought that they sometimes used a dictionary to find parts of speech while twenty-six of them thought they always used a dictionary to find parts of speech and four of them thought they seldom used a dictionary to find parts of speech.

Item 1.6 shows that fifty-three of the students claimed that they sometimes wrote fragmented or incomplete sentences. Thirty-eight of the students thought that they often wrote fragmented or incomplete sentences and nine of them thought they seldom wrote fragmented or incomplete sentences.

Item 1.7 shows that forty-four of the students thought that they often used correct subject and verb agreement. Forty-four of the students thought that they sometimes used correct subject and verb agreement while seven of them thought they always used correct subject and verb agreement and the rest three of them thought they seldom used correct subject and verb agreement.

Item 1.8 shows that forty-eight of the students indicated that they sometimes used correct prepositions. Forty-four of the students thought that they often used correct prepositions while four of them thought they always used correct prepositions and the other four of them thought they seldom used correct prepositions.

Item 1.9 shows that fifty-seven of the students thought that they often used correct pronoun reference. Twenty-five of the students thought that they sometimes used correct pronoun reference while twelve of them thought they always used correct pronoun reference and the other six of them thought they seldom used correct pronoun reference.

Item 1.10 shows that fifty-three of the students claimed that they sometimes used correct tenses. Thirty-four of the students thought that they often used correct tenses while ten of them thought they seldom used correct tenses and the other three of them thought they always used correct tenses.

Table 4

Means of vocabulary problems

Description	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Seldom (2)	Never (1)	Total	Mean	Opinions
2.1 I can use appropriate vocabulary to communicate with the reader.	0	18	67	15	0	100	3.03	Sometimes
2.2 I can use a variety of words.	0	15	64	21	0	100	2.94	Sometimes
2.3 I use a dictionary to check words that I am not sure about before I write.	38	40	10	12	0	100	4.04	Often
2.4 I use simple vocabulary in my writing.	20	57	23	0	0	100	3.97	Often
2.5 I try to use difficult words in my writing.	3	15	46	36	0	100	2.85	Sometimes
2.6 I focus on word meanings not on the grammatical functions.	1	30	32	37	0	100	2.95	Sometimes
2.7 I struggle to use vocabulary in my writing.	12	37	45	6	0	100	3.55	Often
2.8 I use concrete vocabulary in my writing.	3	34	55	8	0	100	3.32	Sometimes

Table 4 (Continued)

Description	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Seldom (2)	Never (1)	Total	Mean	Opinions
2.9 I use abstract vocabulary in my writing.	0	13	72	15	0	100	2.98	Sometimes
2.10 I can use vocabulary as much as I want.	5	8	67	20	0	100	2.98	Sometimes

There are 10 items in table 4 focusing on the participants' vocabulary skill in writing English. Table 4 shows how the students thought about their vocabulary skill.

Item 2.1 shows sixty-seven of the students claimed that they sometimes used appropriate vocabulary to communicate with the reader. Eighteen students often used appropriate vocabulary to communicate with the reader and the other fifteen students claimed they seldom used appropriate vocabulary to communicate with the reader.

Item 2.2 shows sixty-four of the students claimed that they sometimes use a variety of words. Twenty-one students seldom used a variety of words and the other fifteen students claimed they often used a variety of words.

Item 2.3 shows forty of the students claimed that they often used a dictionary to check words that they were not sure about before they wrote. Thirty-eight students always used a dictionary to check words that they were not sure about before they wrote while twelve students seldom used a dictionary and other ten students claimed they sometimes used a dictionary to check words.

Item 2.4 shows fifty-seven of the students claimed that they often used simple vocabulary in their writing while twenty-three of them sometimes used simple vocabulary in their writing and the rest twenty students always used simple vocabulary in their writing.

Item 2.5 shows forty-six of the students thought that they sometimes tried to use difficult words in their writing. The table also states thirty-six students seldom used difficult words in their writing while fifteen students often used difficult words in their writing and other three students claimed they always tried to use difficult words in their writing.

Item 2.6 shows thirty-seven of the students thought that they seldom focused on word meanings. Thirty-two students sometimes focused on word meanings while thirty

students often focused on word meanings and only one student claimed she always focused on word meanings.

Item 2.7 shows forty-five of the students claimed that they often struggled to use vocabulary in their writing. Thirty-seven students often struggled to use vocabulary in their writing while twelve students always struggled to use vocabulary in their writing and the other six students claimed they seldom struggled to use vocabulary in their writing.

Item 2.8 shows fifty-five of the students claimed that they sometimes used concrete vocabulary in their writing. Thirty-four students often used concrete vocabulary in their writing while eight students seldom used concrete vocabulary in their writing and the other three students claimed they always used concrete vocabulary in their writing.

Item 2.9 shows seventy-two of the students claimed that they sometimes used abstract vocabulary in their writing. Fifteen students seldom used abstract vocabulary in their writing and the other thirteen students claimed they often used abstract vocabulary in their writing.

Item 2.10 shows sixty-seven of the students claimed that they could sometimes use vocabulary as much as they want. Twenty students seldom used vocabulary as much as they wanted while eight students often used vocabulary as much as they wanted and the other five students claimed they always used vocabulary as much as they wanted.

Table 5

Means of writing process problems

Description	Always (5)	Often (4)	Sometimes (3)	Seldom (2)	Never (1)	Total	Mean	Opinions
3.1 I can write a good paragraph.	0	3	45	50	2	100	2.49	Seldom
3.2 I can logically organize my ideas in my writing.	0	15	46	39	0	100	2.69	Sometimes
3.3 I can use various patterns of organization in my writing.	0	14	47	37	2	100	2.63	Sometimes
3.4 I can arrange a paragraph logically.	0	14	53	33	0	100	2.81	Sometimes
3.5 I think about the reader as I am writing.	8	20	62	10	0	100	3.26	Sometimes
3.6 I understand the topics that I am going to write about.	5	30	51	14	0	100	3.26	Sometimes
3.7 I tried to find an interesting and relevant topic for myself.	0	34	53	13	0	100	3.21	Sometimes
3.8 I knew the purpose of the writing.	0	20	59	21	0	100	2.99	Sometimes
3.9 I look at my outline from time to time while I am writing.	0	27	39	34	0	100	2.93	Sometimes
3.10 My paragraph writing had a main idea.	3	7	51	39	0	100	2.74	Sometimes

There are 10 items focusing on the writing process problems. Table 5 illustrates how often the students face those kinds of problems in their writing. This table describes the frequencies, percentages, means, and interpretations related to the students' writing process problems.

Item 3.1 shows fifty of the students claimed that they could seldom write a good paragraph. Forty-five students could sometimes write a good paragraph while three of the students could often write a good paragraph and the other two students claimed that they could never write a good paragraph.

Item 3.2 shows forty-six of the students thought that they could sometimes organize their ideas in their writing logically. Thirty-nine of the students seldom organized their ideas logically in their writing and the other fifteen of them could often organize their ideas logically in their writing.

Item 3.3 shows forty-seven of the students claimed that they could sometimes use various patterns of organization in their writing. Thirty-seven of them seldom used various patterns of organization in their writing while fourteen of them often used various patterns of organization in their writing and the rest two of them never used various patterns of organization in their writing.

Item 3.4 shows fifty-three of the students thought that they could sometimes use logical arrangement of paragraph. Thirty-three of them seldom used logical arrangement of paragraph and the other fourteen of them could often use logical arrangement of paragraph.

Item 3.5 shows sixty-two of the students thought that they sometimes thought about the reader as they were writing. Twenty of them often thought about the reader as they were writing while ten of them seldom thought about the reader as they were writing and the other eight of them always thought about the reader as they were writing.

Item 3.6 shows fifty-one of the students claimed that they sometimes understood topics that they were going to write about. Thirty of them often understood the topics that they were going to write about while fourteen of them seldom understood the topics that they were going to write about and the rest five of them always understood the topics that they were going to write about.

Item 3.7 shows fifty-three of the students thought that they sometimes tried to find an interesting and relevant topic for themselves. Thirty-four of them often tried to find an interesting and relevant topic for themselves and the other thirteen of them tried to find an interesting and relevant topic for themselves.

Item 3.8 shows fifty-nine of the students thought that they sometimes knew the purpose of the writing. Twenty-one of them seldom knew the purpose of the writing and the other twenty of them often knew the purpose of the writing.

Item 3.9 shows thirty-four of the students stated that they sometimes looked at their outline from time to time while they were writing. Thirty-four of them seldom looked at their outline from time to time while they were writing and the other twenty-seven of them often looked at their outline from time to time while they were writing.

Item 3.10 shows fifty-one of the students claimed that their paragraph writing sometimes had a main idea. Thirty-nine of their paragraph writing seldom had a main idea while seven of their paragraph writing often had a main idea and the other three of their paragraph writing always had a main idea.

Part III: Needs in English writing

Table 6

Means of needs in English writing

Description	Extremely (5)	Very much (4)	Moderately (3)	Slightly (2)	Not at all (1)	Total	Mean	Opinions
1. To extent do you have difficulty in the following problems of English Writing?								
1.1 Grammar and syntax	13	39	42	6	0	100	3.59	Often
1.2 Vocabulary	5	44	51	0	0	100	3.54	Often
1.3 Writing process	20	38	34	8	0	100	3.70	Often
2. To extent do you need special training courses in relation to the following writing skill?								
2.1 Basic grammar and usage	28	42	27	3	0	100	3.59	Very much
2.2 Intermediate grammar and usage	25	47	28	0	0	100	3.97	Very much
2.3 Advanced grammar and usage	32	24	31	13	0	100	3.75	Very much
2.4 Sentence writing skills	31	46	20	3	0	100	4.05	Very much
2.5 Paragraph writing skills	13	37	47	3	0	100	3.60	Very much
2.6 Essay writing skills	22	37	35	3	3	100	3.72	Very much
2.7 Writing skills for publication of research or articles	20	32	31	14	3	100	3.52	Very much



Table 6 shows the answers to the questions about the students' needs in writing. The students claimed that they often have difficulty in writing process ($X = 3.70$), in grammar and in syntax ($X = 3.59$) and vocabulary ($X = 3.54$). The important needs in writing for grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School are sentence writing skills ($X = 4.05$), intermediate grammar and usage ($X = 3.97$), basic grammar and usage ($X = 3.95$), advanced grammar and usage ($X = 3.75$), essay writing skills ($X = 3.72$), paragraph writing skills ($X = 3.60$), and writing skills for publication of research or articles ($X = 3.52$).

Part IV: Interview

This part contained ten open-ended questions. The twenty participants were asked to answer the questions to get more details about their English writing problems, and the data were interpreted as follows

Item 1: How is English writing taught in your class?

Most of the students thought that it was taught well. Some of them mentioned that they had been studying basic grammar for writing, and some had been practicing writing a short paragraph during the class. They could also follow the structures of sentence given. Some of them stated that they were asked to write an essay or e-mails after classes.

Item 2: How often do you practice writing in English?

The majority of the students stated that they seldom practiced writing in English. They would practice their writing through writing tasks from their English teachers, usually every 2 weeks. Some of them practiced writing sometimes, especially when they

had free time. The other students stated they often wrote sentences, instead of paragraphs or essays.

Item 3: How much time do you spend each time you practice writing in English?

Most of the students usually spent 1-2 hours each time they practiced writing in English. Some students spent from 45 minutes to 1 hour each time, and the rest of them could not define the definite time that they used practicing writing. In addition, the students interviewed reported that how much time they spent depended on the difficulty of the topic.

Item 4: Please give your suggestions for improving your English writing.

The students knew the English writing ability is very necessary. The students stated that they should improve their writing skill continually. Also they should have more chance to study specific writing courses and they stated would be practical if native speaker teachers taught them writing. In addition, they wanted many opportunities to practice English writing in their daily life such as e-mail writing or writing on blogs. They also wanted to learn more useful vocabularies that they could use in English writing, while some of them thought that they should read more English novels or newspapers.

Item 5: What specific difficulties do you experience when writing in English?

The students mentioned that vocabulary problems were the most difficult problem when they wrote in English. They could not use appropriate words in their writing. Forty-three of them stated that grammatical and syntactic problems were major difficulty for them. In addition, twenty-six of them claimed that they could not arrange the content or the content often lacked a main idea. They also found that using variety sentences was hard for them.

Item 6: What types of writing problems do you see as the most common in your writing?

The most common type of writing problems the students had in their writing was vocabulary problems, while the second most common type was grammatical and syntactic problems. Sentence ordering was the third most common problem. The others were writing a good paragraph, using of wrong tenses, and being unable to form complete sentences.

Item 7: What types of writing problems do you perceive as the most serious?

The students claimed that vocabulary problems were the most serious problems in writing. The second serious problems were about grammar and syntax. Using wrong tenses was the third problem, while problem about the writing process and content of writing were also mentioned. Finally, the students struggled when they started to write as they did not know what they should write about or how they should write about it.

Item 8: What strengths and/or weaknesses do you see in your writing?

As for the strengths, the students stated that they could write an understandable paragraph which could communicate with the readers. They sometimes used correct grammar and content. In their paragraph, the students could use a variety of words.

As for their weaknesses, the students said that they couldn't form correct sentences and clear contents.

Item 9: What is your definition of good quality writing?

The majority of the students agreed that good quality writing is writing that is understandable, and that contains a main idea, appropriate vocabularies, and grammatically correct syntactic sentences, and also writing that is fun and creative.

Item 10: What do you think should be done to improve your English writing skills?

The most mentioned opinions were practicing writing and gaining more vocabularies. The students stated that they should practice more in writing because they

believed it could help they write better. Some of them suggested that the school should provide an English writing course for them at least every three months. The minority of the students thought that they should read more English books or write a diary in English.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Summary of the Research

To answer the research questions, the researcher provided two research instruments including a questionnaire and an interview. The participants, grade 10 students at Chomsurang Upatham School, were asked to check the questionnaire to reflect their problems in English writing. The questionnaire aimed to obtain 100 participants' general information in Part I, their writing problems in Part II and their needs in writing English in Part III. Then 20 out of them were required to answer open-ended questions in an interview to get further information. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed by frequency counts, percentages and means, while the data from the interview were also described qualitatively.

Summary of the Findings

The students' writing problems and their needs to improve the writing skills, obtained from the questionnaire, are summarized as follows:

There were three main questions. The first question was about their grammatical and syntactic problems, the second question asked the students to rank their problems about vocabulary, and the last question dealt with the problems related to the writing process.

As for grammatical and syntactic problems, the mean scores showed that the students thought that they often or sometimes did the activities in the statements in Table

3. All the mean scores were over 3.0, which means that the students thought that they were not very poor at grammar.

Similarly, as for vocabulary problems, all the mean scores were quite high, ranging from 2.94 to 3.55, meaning that the students thought that sometimes or often did the activities stated in the statement in Table 4. The students, therefore, thought they were not so bad at vocabulary. Surprisingly, up to almost 70 students thought that they could use appropriate vocabulary to communicate with readers. It should be noted that why the students chose “sometimes” might have been because they did not want to look too good or too bad.

As for problems in the writing process, almost all the mean scores were lower than 3.0, but higher than 2.5. This means that the students did most activities in the writing process, but they may not practice all of them sufficiently.

As for the types of special training courses that the students needed, the most needed special training course was sentence writing skills. An intermediate grammar and usage course was ranked the second most needed course. The third most needed training course was basic grammar and usage.

In order to obtain more information about the participants' problems, an interview was held with 20 students. Most of the students stated that they seldom practiced writing in English and they usually spent one or two hours each time they practiced writing. They were aware that they should improve their writing skill continually. They thought that the biggest problem in writing for them was vocabulary. They thought that a strength in their writing was being able to write a communicative paragraph and a weakness was using vocabulary wrong. The majority of the students agreed that quality writing is writing that is clear and understandable and they thought that practicing and gaining more vocabularies could help to improve their writing skills.

Discussion

The writing problems were investigated by dividing the questionnaire into three parts, which were grammatical and syntactic problems, vocabulary problems, and problems in writing process.

Although most of the mean scores were high and fell around 3.0, out of 5.0, the description for a score between 3.0-3.99 was “sometimes.” This means that the students did not practice doing the activities stated sufficiently. Readers of this research report can look at the problems that the students had most from Tables 1-5. For example, in Table 5, up to 50 students thought that they “seldom” wrote a good paragraph. In Table 5, most of the students put “seldom” or “sometimes” for all the statements, meaning that teachers of EFL writing need to help or encourage their students to do those activities more than before.

Regarding the vocabulary problems that the students encountered in writing English, the researcher found that there were a number of problems affecting their writing ability. For example, they could not use a variety of words in their writing. Sometimes the students could not find appropriate words for their writing. They also used a dictionary a lot to check words before they write, but they may not use them correctly. (Compare Items 2.2 and 2.3 with 2.6 in Table 4). One of the problems about vocabulary is they often used simple vocabulary, meaning that their writing was not interesting.

These results were consistent with the findings of several studies that state that vocabulary is the major problem in English writing. For example, Chinnawong (1999) reported in his study that the students made many mistakes in vocabulary. Khao-Urai (2002) studied errors in English essays and the result showed that vocabulary problems were listed as the biggest problems. Similarly, the researcher found that vocabulary

problems are one of the major difficulties in the classroom. For Thai EFL Learners the biggest difficulty one first meet is how to remember the words efficiently and use them appropriately in the authentic situation.

As an English teacher, one should research the particular features and cultural background of EFL learners and develop the learners' ability to enlarge their vocabulary size. To improve students' writing ability is to teach word families rather than individual words can also greatly increase the better of vocabulary learning. In the opposite, Kavaliauskienė and Janulevièienė (2001) stated that the students' limited general vocabulary competence is trouble for teaching.

The students' needs in the area of vocabulary acquisition were fully met. The researcher also found that the students who listed words in groups could automatically use a variety of vocabulary. On the other hand, the students who learned word by word each time usually took time to recall words.

A meaningful strategy which solves students' vocabulary problem is to set a step of learning. Hatch and Brown (1995, cite in Cameron, 2001) describe five 'essential steps' in vocabulary learning based on research into learners' strategies:

The first step maintains that students should have sources for encountering new words then, they should get a clear image, whether visual or auditory or both, for the forms of the new words. Moreover, students should learn the meaning of the words and they should make a strong memory connection between the forms and meanings of the words. And lastly, students should use the words.

Wenden (1987) suggests the following using in the use of vocabulary learning strategies. The useful strategy should help students to find out the meaning of unknown words, to retain them in long-term memory, to recall them at will, and to use them in oral or written mode.

Hence, empowered by the vocabulary learning strategies brought about learning steps will serve the students' vocabulary acquisition. The proposed strategies constructed with the recommended guidelines and integrated into the way of learning, as a result, generate better learning outcomes. Assisted by the vocabulary learning strategies, the students are expected to be more effective in their target vocabulary acquisition, which in true will greatly enhance and improve their overall English language development.

In contrast, the researcher also insisted that although the students thought that vocabulary was the biggest problem in their writing, they often make errors in grammar and syntax. The students have many grammatical problems. In the classroom, the majority of them said that their major problems involved grammar and syntactic; they had problems about subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and tenses. They wrote fragmented and incomplete sentences from time to time as they claimed they did not know about the grammatical and syntactic mistakes until the teachers returned them. Meanwhile, the results from questionnaire showed that the students not only use correct pronoun reference but also often use correct subject and verb agreement. Grammatical and syntactic problems are important problems in writing. For example, Ponvarin (2007) studied the errors of graduate students and found that the students made most errors in the use of verbs, and errors of sentence structure ranked the second most.

As for the students' needs to improve the writing skills, the majority of the students needed training courses. In addition, the students stated that they should be improved their writing skill continually and should have more chances to study specific writing courses. Most of them totally agreed that they should practice more in writing, as they believed that it can help to write better. This corresponds to the facts that there are not much teaching writing in high schools. Teachers of English are usually loaded with teaching hours and other responsibilities, so they do not teaching writing a lot, partly

because it involves grading and because writing is the most difficult skill to teach. What schools can do, therefore, is inviting outside experienced writing teachers to teach writing. It can be done in the evening or on the weekend. But the conclusion is, there must be more teaching writing to secondary schools students.

Limitations of the Study

The study was done with only female students. Female students are thought to be more hard-working than male students in with regard to studying English. If the sampling group had consisted of both genders, the results would have been different. Considering that factor, the generalizability of the study result is questionable.

Implications of the study

The results of the study will benefit teachers teaching English writing in secondary schools. The findings will guide them to manage writing courses or activities. In addition, these results will provide useful information for secondary teachers who teach both writing and other skills of English.

Recommendations

Some recommendations for studying English writing problems and further studies are presented below.

1. Further studies should be conducted with a larger sampling of students, both males and females.
2. More categories of problems should be measured and should cover all areas to ensure that the study is reliable.

3. The reading skills should be investigated, as reading and writing skills relate each other.





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APPENDICES



Appendix A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Consent Form

Project name “A Study of Writing Problems of Grade 10 Students at Chomsurang
Upatham School”

(ชื่อสารนิพนธ์ “การศึกษาสาเหตุของปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นในการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียนชั้น
มัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 4 โรงเรียนจอมสุรางค์อุปถัมภ์ จังหวัดพระนครศรีอยุธยา”)

Researcher Leelapan Pompuang e-mail: the_tontao@hotmail.com

(ชื่อผู้วิจัย ลีลาพันธ์ พุ่มพวง)

Introduction (บทนำ)

You are invited to consider participating in this study. The decision to
participate in this study lies with you. If you decide to participate, please sign at the line
of this form.

(ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามถือว่าเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างในงานวิจัยนี้ การตัดสินใจตอบคำถาม
ขึ้นอยู่กับความสมัครใจของท่าน หากคุณตัดสินใจที่จะเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่าง กรุณาลงนามตรง
ส่วนที่ลงนามที่กำหนด)

Explanation of the study (คำอธิบาย)

This study aims to explore Thai students writing problems and to study their needs in
learning and improving writing English. It is also hoped that the findings of this survey
research will benefit teachers who are responsible for teaching writing English in

secondary schools. This study purposefully selected students who are in Matthayom 4 at Chomsurang Upatham School during the second semester of the academic year 2013 to participate in this study. A questionnaire will be distributed to these students. Focus group interviews will be subsequently be held with some students to get more details on the views expressed in the questionnaires. (การศึกษาในครั้งนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อสำรวจปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นในงานเขียนของนักเรียนไทยและเพื่อศึกษาความต้องการในการเรียนและพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนของพวกเขา นอกจากนี้ผู้วิจัยยังมุ่งหวังว่าผลที่ได้จากการวิจัยในครั้งนี้จะเป็นประโยชน์กับผู้สอนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษา งานวิจัยนี้คัดเลือกนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 4 โรงเรียนจอมสุรางค์อุปถัมภ์ที่กำลังศึกษาในภาคเรียนที่ 2 ปีการศึกษา 2556 เป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่าง นักเรียนที่เป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างได้รับการคัดเลือกให้ตอบแบบสอบถาม นักเรียนกลุ่มดังกล่าวได้รับการคัดเลือกอีกครั้งให้เป็นผู้รับการสัมภาษณ์เพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลและรายละเอียดมากยิ่งขึ้น)

Confidentiality (ความเป็นส่วนตัวของผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม)

The information gathered in this study will be strictly confidential. No reference to specific names will be made while reporting on the study. The information provided will only be used for researcher purposes and, if required, the results of this study will be shared with participants. (ข้อมูลจากการตอบแบบสอบถามของท่านในงานวิจัยนี้จะคงไว้ซึ่งความเป็นส่วนตัวอย่างรัดกุม จะไม่มีการระบุชื่อของผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามในระหว่างการทำรายงานผลการศึกษา ข้อมูลที่ได้นี้จะนำไปใช้เพื่อจุดประสงค์ในงานวิจัยเท่านั้น หากต้องการทราบข้อมูลเพิ่มเติมผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามสามารถตรวจสอบได้)

Your participation (ถึงผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม)

Participation in this study is voluntary and students may quite from this study at any time if they feel they no longer want to continue. (ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามในงานวิจัยนี้ตอบแบบสอบถามด้วยความสมัครใจและหากต้องการยุติการตอบแบบสอบถามสามารถทำได้ทันที)

Student's consent (คำยินยอมของนักเรียน)

I have read the information provided in this consent form and I voluntary participate in this study. (ข้าพเจ้าได้อ่านข้อมูลในแบบยินยอมข้างต้นแล้วและข้าพเจ้าสมัครใจเป็นกลุ่มตัวอย่างในงานวิจัยครั้งนี้)

Your signature (ลายมือชื่อ) _____ Date (วันที่)

Adapted from Mackey and Gass 2005

Part I: General background information (ข้อมูลทั่วไป)

Directions: Please fill in the blanks provided and put a mark (✓) in the box that best reflects your answer. (กรุณาเติมข้อความในช่องว่างให้สมบูรณ์และใส่เครื่องหมาย ✓ ในช่องว่างที่เป็นคำตอบที่ตรงกับคุณมากที่สุด)

1. Name(ชื่อ).....Surname(นามสกุล).....

2. Gender(เพศ) male(ชาย) female(หญิง)

3. Class(ชั้น): M.(ม.) 4/

4. How many years have you been studying English? (ท่านเรียนภาษาอังกฤษมาเป็นเวลากี่ปี)

1 - 5 years (ปี) 6 – 10 years (ปี) 11 – 15 years (ปี)

5. Have you ever attended a specific English writing course(s)? (ท่านเคยเข้าร่วมฝึกอบรม/เรียนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษโดยเฉพาะหรือไม่)

Yes (ใช่) (Please specify, โปรดระบุ).....

No (ไม่ใช่)

6. Self-evaluation for English writing skills (แบบประเมินตนเองสำหรับทักษะการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ)

	Excellent (ดีมาก) 5	Good (ดี) 4	Fair (ปานกลาง) 3	Poor (ต่ำ) 2	Very poor (ต่ำที่สุด) 1
a. Grammar and syntax (ไวยากรณ์และโครงสร้างทางภาษา)					
b. Vocabulary (คำศัพท์)					
c. Writing process (กระบวนการเขียน)					
d. Sentence Structure (ส่วนประกอบต่างของประโยค)					
e. Understand the differences of complete and incomplete sentences (เข้าใจความแตกต่างของประโยคที่สมบูรณ์และไม่สมบูรณ์)					

Part II: Writing problems (ปัญหาด้านการเขียน)

Directions: Please indicate to what degree the following occur in your English writing.

(กรุณาเลือกระดับความถี่ให้ตรงกับปัญหาการเขียนที่ระบุไว้)

Description	Always (เป็นประจำ) 5	Often (บ่อย) 4	Sometimes (บางครั้ง) 3	Seldom (แทบจะไม่เคย) 2	Never (ไม่เคย) 1
1. Grammar and Syntactic Problems for EFL/ESL learners (ปัญหาด้านไวยากรณ์และโครงสร้างทางภาษาสำหรับนักเรียนที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศหรือภาษาที่สอง)					
1.1 I use appropriate word form in my writing. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้ชนิดของคำได้เหมาะสมกับงานเขียนของข้าพเจ้า)					
1.2 I use variety of sentence structures. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้โครงสร้างของประโยคได้อย่างหลากหลาย)					
1.3 I know the different types of phrase, clause, and sentence and capitalization. (ข้าพเจ้าทราบความแตกต่างของวลีและประโยคประเภทต่างๆรวมถึงการใช้ตัวอักษรตัวใหญ่ในประโยค)					
1.4 I use appropriate punctuations. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้เครื่องหมายวรรคตอนได้อย่างเหมาะสม)					
1.5 I use dictionary to find part of speech. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้พจนานุกรมในการหาชนิดของคำ)					
1.6 I write with fragmented or incomplete sentences. (ข้าพเจ้าเขียนประโยคที่ไม่สมบูรณ์)					
1.7 I use correct subject and verb agreement. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้ประธานและกริยาได้อย่างถูกต้องและสอดคล้องกัน)					

Description	Always (เป็นประจำ) 5	Often (บ่อยๆ) 4	Sometimes (บางครั้ง) 3	Seldom (แทบจะไม่เคย) 2	Never (ไม่เคย) 1
1.8 I use correct prepositions. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้บุพบทได้อย่างถูกต้อง) 1.9 I use correct pronoun reference. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้คำสรรพนามได้อย่างถูกต้อง) 1.10 I use correct tenses. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้ tenses ต่างๆได้อย่างถูกต้อง)					
2. Vocabulary Problems for EFL/ESL learners (ปัญหาด้านคำศัพท์สำหรับนักเรียนที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ เป็นภาษาต่างประเทศหรือภาษาที่สอง)					
2.1 I can use appropriate vocabulary to communicate with the reader. (ข้าพเจ้าสามารถใช้คำศัพท์ได้เหมาะสมและสื่อสารกับ ผู้อ่านได้เป็นอย่างดี) 2.2 I can use a variety of words. (ข้าพเจ้าสามารถใช้คำศัพท์ได้อย่างหลากหลาย) 2.3 I use a dictionary to check words that I am not sure about before I write. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้พจนานุกรมในการตรวจสอบความถูกต้องของ คำศัพท์ที่ข้าพเจ้าไม่แน่ใจก่อนเขียน) 2.4 I use simple vocabulary in my writing. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้คำศัพท์ง่ายๆในงานเขียน) 2.5 I try to use difficult words in my writing. (ข้าพเจ้าพยายามใช้คำศัพท์ยากในงานเขียน) 2.6 I focus on word meanings not the grammatical functions. (ข้าพเจ้าคำศัพท์ตามความหมายโดยไม่คำนึงถึง ลักษณะไวยากรณ์)					

Description	Always (เป็นประจำ) 5	Often (บ่อย) 4	Sometimes (บางครั้ง) 3	Seldom (แทบจะไม่เคย) 2	Never (ไม่เคย) 1
2.7 I struggle to use vocabulary in my writing. (ข้าพเจ้ามีปัญหาในการใช้คำศัพท์ในงานเขียน) 2.8 I use concrete vocabulary in my writing. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้คำศัพท์ที่เป็นรูปธรรมในงานเขียน) 2.9 I use abstract vocabulary in my writing. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้คำศัพท์ที่เป็นนามธรรมในงานเขียน) 2.10 I can vocabulary as much as I want. (ข้าพเจ้าใช้คำศัพท์ได้มากเท่าที่ต้องการ)					
3. Problems of writing process (ปัญหาด้านกระบวนการเขียนสำหรับนักเรียนที่ใช้ ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศหรือภาษาที่สอง)					
3.1 I can write a good paragraph. (ข้าพเจ้าสามารถเขียนบทความได้ดี) 3.2 I can logically organize my ideas in my writing. (ข้าพเจ้าสามารถเรียบเรียงความคิดอย่างมีเหตุผลใน งานเขียน) 3.3 I can use various patterns of organization in my writing. (ข้าพเจ้าสามารถเขียนโดยใช้รูปแบบการเขียนที่ หลากหลาย) 3.4 I can arrange paragraph logically. (ข้าพเจ้าสามารถใช้การเรียบเรียงบทความได้อย่างมี เหตุผล) 3.5 I think about the reader as I am writing. (ข้าพเจ้าคำนึงถึงผู้อ่านขณะที่เขียน) 3.6 I understand the topics that I am going to write about. (ข้าพเจ้าเข้าใจหัวข้อที่จะเขียน)					

Description	Always (เป็นประจำ) 5	Often (บ่อย) 4	Sometimes (บางครั้ง) 3	Seldom (แทบจะไม่เคย) 2	Never (ไม่เคย) 1
<p>3.7 I tried to find an interesting and relevant topic for myself. (ข้าพเจ้าพบหัวข้อที่น่าสนใจและเหมาะกับตนเอง)</p> <p>3.8 I knew the purpose of the writing. (ข้าพเจ้าทราบถึงจุดประสงค์ของการเขียน)</p> <p>3.9 I look at my outline from time to time while I am writing. (ข้าพเจ้าดูกรอบของงานเขียนตลอดเวลาที่เขียน)</p> <p>3.10 My paragraph writing had a main idea. (บทความของข้าพเจ้ามีใจความสำคัญ)</p>					

Part III: Needs in English writing

Directions: Please indicate to what degree the following occur in your English writing.

Description	Extremely (5)	Very much (4)	Moderately (3)	Slightly (2)	Not at all (1)
1. What extent do you have difficulty in the following problems of English Writing? (คุณมีปัญหาในการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษเหล่านี้มากน้อยเพียงใด?)					
1.1 Grammar and syntax (ไวยากรณ์และการใช้คำ) 1.2 Vocabulary (คำศัพท์) 1.3 Writing process (กระบวนการเขียน)					
2. What extent do you need special training courses in relation to the following writing skill? (คุณต้องการเข้ารับการฝึกอบรมการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในหลักสูตรต่างๆเหล่านี้มากน้อยเพียงใด?)					
2.1 Basic grammar and usage (ไวยากรณ์และการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษพื้นฐาน) 2.2 Intermediate grammar and usage (ไวยากรณ์และการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษระดับกลาง) 2.3 Advanced grammar and usage (ไวยากรณ์และการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษระดับสูง) 2.4 Sentence writing skills (ทักษะด้านการเขียนระดับประโยค) 2.5 Paragraph writing skills (ทักษะด้านการเขียนระดับย่อหน้า)					

Description	Extremely (5)	Very much (4)	Moderately (3)	Slightly (2)	Not at all (1)
2.6 Essay writing skills (ทักษะด้านการเขียนเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษ) 2.7 Writing skills for publication of research or articles (ทักษะการเขียนบทความเชิงวิชาการเพื่อ เผยแพร่)					



Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTION LIST

1. How English writing is taught in your class?
(การสอนเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในห้องเรียนของคุณเป็นอย่างไร)
2. How often do you practice writing in English?
(คุณฝึกการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษบ่อยแค่ไหน)
3. How much time do you spend each time you practice writing in English?
(ในแต่ละครั้งที่คุณฝึกเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ คุณใช้เวลานานเท่าไร)
4. Please give your suggestions for improve your English writing.
(กรุณาให้คำแนะนำเพิ่มเติมที่จะพัฒนางานเขียนภาษาอังกฤษของคุณได้)
5. What specific difficulties do you experience when writing in English?
(จากประสบการณ์ของคุณ อะไรที่เป็นปัญหาในการเขียน)
6. What types of writing problems do you see as the most common in your writing?
(ปัญหาที่คุณมักพบในงานเขียนของคุณคืออะไร)
7. What type of writing problems do you perceive as the most serious?
(คุณคิดว่าปัญหาใดเป็นปัญหาที่สำคัญที่สุดในงานเขียนของคุณ)

8. What strengths and/or weaknesses do you see in your writing?

(ข้อดีและข้อด้อยในงานเขียนของคุณคืออะไร)

9. What is your definition of good quality writing?

(งานเขียนที่ดีในความคิดของคุณคืออะไร)

10. What do you think should be done to improve your English writing skills?

(อะไรที่คุณคิดว่าจะทำให้คุณพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษได้)





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