

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is designed to analyze errors in English compositions written by the third year English major students, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University in academic year 2010. This chapter aims to describe how the research methodology is adopted for this research. There are five sections in the chapter as follows: population and subjects, method for data collection, data collection, data analysis, and summary of the chapter.

3.1 Population and Subjects

The population of this research were 38 third year English major students studying in the second semester, academic year 2010, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University.

The subjects chosen for this study were 38 third year English major students studying in the second semester, academic year 2010, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University, selected by purposive sampling.

For writing a composition, the writers should have prior knowledge of writing process (Aungwatanakul. 1997 : 185). Thus, the researcher used this technique to choose the subjects because all of them had already attended the writing courses entitled 'Grammar in Context' 1551102, 'Paragraph Writing' 1552401 and 'Creative Writing' 1553105 in the first semester of academic year 2007, the first semester of academic

year 2008, and first semester of academic year 2010, respectively. Therefore, they were supposed to have the background knowledge of writing a composition.

3.2 Method for Data Collection

The method for data collection in this research was writing an English composition. This method was chosen because, according to Norrish's (1983 : 81-88) methods of carrying out an error analysis, the pre-selected category approach, the material from which the errors are taken should be representative of the student's standard work. It must be free writing because guided writing will only give certain errors and those may not be a representative selection. On the other hand, free writing permits writers to write as freely as they want (Aungwatanakul. 1997 : 185).

Thus, the researcher searched ten interesting topics from the internet and from writing textbooks. Those ten topics were selected by using the course description of 'Creative Writing' as the selection criteria. The course description of this course was personalized, informal writing, whether as articles, narrative or descriptive essays, with special attention to organization of ideas, discourse features, and logical progression and less concern on total grammatical accuracy with focus on flow of thought. Next, the researcher consulted with the research advisors to authenticate that the selected topics were appropriate to the students. Then researcher asked the students to choose only one topic for writing a composition. The topic they chose was 'A Memorable Incident in My Life'. So, the students wrote one essay consisting of 140-200 words within 60 minutes on that topic. Another reason this topic was chosen was because it was a topic that related to the students directly. Thus, they could

narrate an event in their life that they remembered well or were impressed by. Therefore, writing about such a topic was not too difficult for them.

3.3 Data Collection

Thirty-eight third year English major students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University were asked to write a free writing piece on the topic 'A Memorable Incident in My Life' of about 140-200 words in class within sixty minutes on 25th February 2011, during the second semester of the academic year 2010. After the writing was completed, the compositions were selected by excluding the compositions which were shorter than 139 words. After excluding some compositions, the researcher ended up with 20 sample compositions of free writing consisting of 5,548 words. The selected compositions were used as the samples in this research.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed and categorized as described below :

3.4.1 Coding of Errors

3.4.1.1 The researcher checked all sample compositions to find errors and marked all of the errors found in each sample paper. For analyzing errors in the obtained data, the researcher exploited the scheme of error classification which was adapted from that of such researchers as Dulay et al. (1982), as the guidelines in Chapter Two because that scheme covers the board details about the types of errors that are supposed to occur in this research, namely, grammatical errors, semantic errors, and lexical errors.

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

For example:

Student 9 wrote the following sentence :

‘It ... a very good trip.’

The researcher typed the error sentence and recorded the types of errors under student 9 as follows :

1. Student 9

Omission of verbs

It ... a very good trip.

Correct sentence

It was a very good trip.

3.4.1.3 After checking and correcting errors were completed, the checked errors were firstly examined by the research advisors. After that, the researcher recruited three experts of the English language to check the types of errors and the correct sentence based on the researcher coding. These experts were: 1) Miss Sumitra Pankulbadee ; 2) Dr. Chookiat Jarat, and one native speaker ; and 3) Mr. William Francis Gorman. All of them are teachers of English Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University. The researcher asked them to be the experts because they have much experience teaching English writing for several years and also Mr. William Francis Gorman is an English native speaker.

3.4.1.4 When the experts finished checking the errors coded by the researcher, the final errors coding were adapted according to the experts' recommendations. For items on which there was disagreement, all the experts reviewed the coding guidelines, recorded the data together and discussed any discrepancies until they reached a consensus.

3.4.2 Categorization of Errors

3.4.2.1 After checked the types of errors and typed the wrong sentences and the correct sentences, the researcher categorized the errors found into three main categories and their sub types as follows : 1) grammatical errors consisted of the errors in the use of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, conjunction, tenses, agreement, determiners, possessives, punctuations, contraction forms, and capitalization ; 2) syntactic errors consisted of the errors in the use of incomplete sentence structures, parallel structure, compound sentences, word orders, complex sentences, 'there' structure sentence, voices, run on sentences, comparison, and redundancy; and 3) lexical errors consisted of the errors of spelling, literal translation from Thai (L1) to English (L2), and word choice.

3.4.2.2 When all types of errors were coded, the researcher studied each student's error type and specified the code for each type of error. Then, the researchers counted the number of errors and recorded into the errors recording form.

For example :

1. Error in the use of nouns

1.1.1 Omission of nouns

1.1.2 Omission of plural endings

1.1.3 Misuse of plural endings

1.1.4 The use of singular nouns instead of plural nouns

1.1.5 The use of plural nouns instead of singular nouns

1.1.6 Confusion of nouns with other words

Table 3.1

Error Recording Form

Types of Errors Students	Types of Errors					
	1.1.1	1.1.2	1.1.3	1.1.4	1.1.5	1.1.6
S1						
S2						
S3						
S4						
S5						
Total						

After recording each type of error on the error recording form, the researcher calculated the occurrence of errors of each type compared to the total number of errors by frequency and percent.

3.4.3 Coding of Causes of Errors

After categorizing the errors, the researcher studied all types of error sentences which were typed with the correct ones and analyzed the causes of them. The researcher coded the causes following the scheme developed by Richards' (1971 ; cited in Ellis, 1995 : 59) and Norish (1983) as follows:

- 1) Mother tongue interference. Skinner (1957 ; cited in Norrish.

1983: 22) states that if language is essentially a set of habits, then when we try to learn new habits, the old ones will interfere with the new ones. This is referred to as 'mother tongue interference' or 'first language interference.'

Example : My sister was diligent very.

2) Overgeneralization errors. This kind of error occurs when the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of other structures in the target language. Generally, it involves the creation of one deviant structure in place of two target language structures

Example : He can sings.

3) Ignorance of rule restrictions. This kind of error involves the application of rules to contexts where they do not apply. An example is He made me to rest. The writer makes this kind of mistake by extending the pattern found with the majority of verbs that take infinitive complements. For example, He asked/wanted/invited me to go. Furthermore, analogy and memorization may be causes of this kind of error.

Example : The old man sit on the bed.

4) False concepts hypothesized (i.e. the learner fails to comprehend fully). This kind of error occurs when the learner does not fully comprehend a distinction in the target language.

Example : Susan writed the letter to her mother.

5) Incomplete application of rules. This kind of error involves a failure to fully develop a structure. Therefore, learners of L2 English have been observed to use the declarative word order.

Example : About 9 o'clock, she going to bed.

6) Carelessness. It is often closely related to lack of motivation.

One way of reducing the number of 'careless' errors in written work is to get students to check each other's work. This will involve students in an active search for errors. At the same time, while discussing these errors in class, English can be used for genuine communication

Example : We stayed there about 5 – 10 minuites. (minutes)

The researcher analyzed the causes of errors and then typed the cause under the error sentence.

For example :

My friend everybody they are good people and everybody can help me something about learning in university.

Correct sentence

All of my friends are good people, and everybody can help me.

From the above example, this sentence has an error in the literal translation from Thai (L1) to English (L2). This error might result from mother tongue interference.

However, it is possible that one error can have more than one cause.

For example :

Then, we went to the hospital. Because we don't believe.'

From the above example, this sentence has an error in the use of incomplete sentence structure. This error might result from 3 causes of errors : 1) mother tongue interference ; 2) ignorance of rule restriction ; and 3) incomplete application of rules.

Thus, the researcher typed all causes of that error sentence.

Then, we went to the hospital. Because we don't believe.

Correct sentence

Then, we went to the hospital because we did not believe.

Causes of errors : 1) mother tongue interference

2) ignorance of rule restriction

3) incomplete application of rules.

After that, the researcher recruited the research advisor to check the coding of causes of errors. Then the causes of errors were proposed to the experts to check the correctness of coding. For the causes on which there was disagreement, all the experts reviewed the coding guidelines, recorded the data together and discussed any discrepancies until they reached a consensus.

3.4.4 Categorization of Causes of Errors

When all causes of errors were typed, the researcher studied each cause and specified the code for each type. Then, the researcher coded the number of causes of errors and recorded those causes on the causes of errors recording form.

A code number referring to each cause was set as follows:

No. 1 Mother tongue interference

No. 2 Overgeneralization

No. 3 Ignorance of rule restriction

No. 4 False concepts hypothesized

No. 5 Incomplete application

No. 6 Carelessness