

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to analyze the errors occurred in English compositions written by English major students. The results of data analysis are discussed in this chapter whose content is divided into four parts: 1) summary of the main findings, 2) discussion of the findings, 3) pedagogical implication, and 4) suggestion for further research.

#### **5.1 Summary of the Main Findings**

The purposes of this research were: 1) to categorize types of errors in English compositions written by the third year English major students in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University; and 2) to examine the causes of errors in English compositions written by the third year English major students in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University.

The subjects used in this study were 38 third year English major students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University, selected by purposive sampling. All of them had already attended the writing courses entitled 1551102 'Grammar in Context', 1552401 'Paragraph Writing' and 1553105 'Creative Writing' in the first semester of academic year 2007, the first semester of academic year 2008, and the first semester of academic year 2010, respectively.

The method for data collection in this research was writing an English composition. 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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. The statistics used to analyze the data were frequency and percent.

For data analysis, the researcher checked all sample compositions to find errors in each sample paper. For analyzing errors in the obtained data, the researcher exploited the scheme of error classification which was adapted from Dulay et al. (1982). The errors made by the subjects were identified into various types. Then all errors were grouped into three main categories: 1) grammatical error; 2) syntactic errors; and 3) lexical errors. After categorizing the errors, the researcher studied all types of errors and analyzed their causes following the scheme developed by Richards (1971; cited in Ellis, 1995) and Norish (1983). The findings of this study were described as follows:

1. The results of error analysis revealed that the students made the errors in three main categories. It was found that grammatical errors occurred most frequently, followed by lexical errors and syntactic errors, respectively.

1.1 Grammatical errors were found most frequently among the three categories as mentioned above. The grammatical errors found were grouped into four main types. The most frequently found errors were parts of speech, followed by the use of tenses, mechanics, and miscellaneous errors, respectively.

1.2 Lexical errors were the second highest among the three categories. Three types of lexical errors were found in this study. The most frequently found errors were spelling, followed by literal translation from Thai (L1) into English (L2), and errors in word choices, respectively.

1.3 Syntactic errors were the third highest among the three categories. There were nine sub-types of syntactic errors found in this study. The first three sub-types that occurred most frequently were the use of incomplete sentence structures, followed by redundancy, word order, the use of 'there' structure, and the use of voices, respectively.

2. The results of the study revealed that the most frequently found causes of errors in the writing was false concepts hypothesized, followed by ignorance of rules restrictions, incomplete application of rules, mother tongue interference, carelessness, and overgeneralization, respectively.

## 5.2 Discussion of the Main Findings

The researcher discusses the main findings of the error analysis and the causes of errors as follows:

### 5.2.1 Errors Found in English Compositions

The research results revealed that there were three main categories found in English compositions: 1) grammatical errors; 2) lexical errors; and 3) syntactic errors, respectively. It was found that among the three categories, grammatical errors occurred most frequently. It means that English major students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University have difficulty in the use of grammatical rules when writing a composition, especially parts of speech and tenses. This could be explained that their proficiency to apply grammatical rules to write a composition is still insufficient. It is possible that they have poor grammar knowledge. This phenomenon may cause from the lack of constantly practice using grammar in writing a composition or any written work. Also, they may have less opportunity to know what types of errors they commit in their writings because they do not concern with the errors that a teacher has corrected onto their papers, but worrying and focusing on scores. Moreover, they may have less chance to correct those errors by themselves or they may have ones to do so, but do not aware of its importance. Thus, they do not recognize what errors they made and how to correct them. These events cause the occurrences of the same errors committed by the same students. This is supported by Ge (2005) who pointed out that it has long been the tradition that teachers are responsible for revising or editing their students' writing. Additionally, Wang (2005) confirmed that this has led to the situation in which teacher-dominated feedback still remains prevalent in English writing classrooms.

English teachers mainly concentrate on the correction of grammar and spelling. Some students just take a glance at what the teacher has corrected, while many others may not even look at the corrections. This results in a mindset in which they fail to reflect upon their mistakes. Also, Ge (2005) pointed out that one further consequence is that teacher-centered assessment is seen as not only time-consuming, but also an inefficient means to improve student writing level. The end result of this lack of independence is that student creativity and activeness are hindered, and motivation and proficiency in writing remain low. Moreover, Norrish (1983) suggested that one way to reduce the number of errors in writing is to let students to check each other's work.

The finding of the present study is academically consistent with Lukanavanich (1988) who mentioned that the most frequently found errors were grammatical errors and that errors in the use of tenses were problematic areas for students. Also, this research finding agrees with the research by Khaourai (2002) who investigated an error in both free writings and guided writings written by English major students of Rajabhat Institute Nakorn Pathom. The finding of her study revealed that the most frequently found errors were grammatical errors. In addition, the findings of the present study do agree with Chownahe's study (2000) that the problems on intralingual and developmental errors consisted of a number of nouns, tenses, word selection, determiners, punctuation and capitalization, form of pronouns, prepositions and subject-verb agreement.

Interestingly, it seems to indicate that students pay more attention to words and sentence structures than grammar regulations because the number of errors in lexicon and syntax are less than the number of the grammatical ones. This is

consistent with the results of research by Srinon (1999) who studied an error analysis of free compositions. He found that the most frequently found error was the use of tenses, whereas literal translation from L1 (Thai) into English (L2) ranked the sixth and wrong choices of words ranked the eighth.

### **5.2.2 Causes of Errors in English Compositions**

To find the causes of errors in writing, the researcher studied each type of errors found in the compositions on the basis of the concept of the causes of errors by Richards (1971; cited in Ellis: 1995) and Norrish (1983). The findings revealed that the number of causes of errors was 1,191. The research results regarding the causes of errors found in English compositions are discussed as follows:

The finding of the present study revealed that the major cause of errors found in English compositions was false concept hypothesized. It means that the students made errors in writing English compositions because they fail to understand completely to use English language correctly; in other words, the occurred errors may cause from faulty comprehension of distinction in the target language (Richards. 1971; cited in Ellis, 1995 : 59). Richards (1974) puts this cause of errors into a class of developmental or intralingual errors. That means false concepts hypothesized does not occurred from the structure of the mother tongue, but based on the incomplete conception to the target language. However, this faulty comprehension in English may caused from some important circumstances as follows:

First of all, this faulty concept may be sometimes due to the inappropriate grading of teaching techniques and the context of learning. Consequently, the students often make errors because of an ambiguous explanation from the teacher and unclear

presentation of teaching materials. The findings of the present study are supported by Norrish (1983) who stated that this kind of errors may come from the context of learning or material-induced errors. In addition, he suggested that the teacher should teach the use of the present continuous tense by using a radio commentary of football match as the appropriate context instead of using a series of pictures illustrating a sequence of actions. Similarly, Richards (1971) stated that false concepts include misleading from the teacher, faulty presentation of a structure in a textbook, improperly contextualized pattern, confused vocabulary items because of ambiguous presentation and inappropriately formal forms of language bookish language. Additionally, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) confirmed that induced errors are brought about by a teacher's sequencing or presenting linguistic items in a way which creates confusion in the language learner's mind.

Secondly, it is possible that students built up incorrect concepts of language rules by themselves because in the course of learning a language, learners may interpret a concept in such a way that it makes them create erroneous sentences. In the present study, it was found that students tends to make errors from false concepts hypothesized especially in errors in word choices such as *scan number 8* instead of *screen number 8*, *We went to go dinner* instead of *we went to have dinner*, and *have gift to me* instead of *send gift to me*. The findings of the present study are consistent with the findings reported by linguists who conducted the study on errors and causes of errors. Brown (1980) stated that once a learner acquired parts of the new system, more and more intralingual errors within L2 would occur. Moreover, Richards (1974) has found from the studies of English errors produced by speakers of many languages that these errors reflect some developmental errors which illustrate

the learner attempting to build up hypotheses about the English language from his limited experience of it in the classroom or textbook. He also gives an example of the past auxiliary verb which may be interpreted as past tense marker producing the following type of sentence: One day it was happened. In a similar circumstance is may be taken as the present tense marker to produce a sentence like: He is speaks French. Furthermore, he pointed out that learners may assume that some vocabulary have the same meaning and can be used in the same context, such as, the word *teach* for *learn*, *do* for *make*, *come* for *go*, and *bring* for *take*. Additionally, Liu (1999b) stated that some students may think that words such as *make*, *do*, and *take* are de-lexicalized verbs, so they can replace another one freely.

Thirdly, false concepts hypothesized may cause from social situation and cultural tradition. That means false concepts hypothesized may occur when language learners have recognized the experience from society, culture, and ways of life in his country which are extremely different from those of people who live in English speaking country. The results of the present study are consistent with concepts reported by Richards and Sampson (1974) who stated that the factors affecting second language acquisition of the learners are: 1) intralingual interference, this refers to items produced by the learner which reflects not only the structure of the mother tongue, but also generalization based on partial exposure to the target language; 2) sociolinguistic situation, different settings for language use result in different degrees and types of language learning. These may be distinguished in terms of the effects of the sociocultural setting of the learner's language and the relation between the learner and the target language community and the respective linguistic markers of these relations and identities. In this factor, the motivation for learning a second



language may be included; modality, the modality of perception to the target language and the modality of production may involve the acquisition of two partially overlapping systems; 3) age, this may affect the approximative system. It is one of the aspects of the child's learning capacities that changes as he grows older. The memory span increases with age and when he acquires a great number of abstract concepts, he uses these to interpret his experience of language learning; successions of approximative systems, this factor concerns the lack of stably approximative system of a learner. Such system is unstable in given individuals because there is continuous improvement in learning the target language. In addition, the circumstances surrounding individuals' language learning are never identical, and the acquisition of new lexical, phonological, and syntactic items varies from one individual to another; 4) universal hierarchy of difficulty, this factor concerns the inherent difficulty for some students in learning certain phonological, syntactic, or semantic items and structures. Some forms may be inherently difficult for both non-native speakers and some native speakers. These difficulties result not only from interlingual interference but also because of universally difficult nature of the language elements.

### **5.3 Pedagogical Implications**

The results of this research could be advantageous for pedagogy as follows:

5.3.1 As a major result of this study regarding the errors, it was found that grammatical errors were most frequently occurred in English compositions. The result of the study indicated that the improvement of grammar usage was necessary and important to help students enhance their writing skills. Therefore, the teachers of

English at Buriram Rajabhat University should design the lessons or teaching plans to help the students gain more proficiency in writing English compositions, especially the use of English grammar (Parts of speech, tenses, and punctuation), lexicon (spelling, literal trans literal from Thai (L1) to English (L2), word choice) and syntax (incomplete sentence structures, redundancy, word order, the use of 'there' structure and the use of voice). However, the results of this research should be beneficial not only for teachers at Buriram Rajabhat University, but also for those teaching at other Rajabhat Universities or educational institutions who can utilize these results when developing their curricula in order to help the students achieve mastery English proficiency.

5.3.2 As a minor result of this study regarding the causes of errors, it revealed that the main cause of errors found in English compositions were false concepts hypothesized, followed by ignorance of rules restrictions and incomplete application of rules. The results of the study seem to suggest that some errors may probably be encouraged by teaching materials and techniques. Thus, teachers of English can use the results of this research as a guideline to improve their instruction and teaching techniques.

5.3.3 The results of this research regarding all three categories of errors found in English compositions would be helpful when applied to students. When the teachers finished correcting the students written work, by giving some feedback and returning it to the students, they would know their own deficiency in language use. As a result, the students might be aware and try to avoid these errors in the next writing attempt. In addition, the students may find their own way based on their

learning strategies or learning style preferences to deal with these errors. For example, they may find extra exercises to have more practice in order to develop better understanding of the language and to prevent these errors from recurring in their writing. As for teaching, the teacher can use the results of all three categories of errors by explaining those errors that students often make in their compositions to enable them comprehend the causes of errors and finally they will be able to correct those errors themselves.

In conclusion, as mentioned above, it was found that the results of error analysis can be applied to pedagogy. Consequently, teachers should consider the results of an error analysis by adapting them to use in the instruction in order to improve the student English proficiency and help them to be the successful language learners having a better skills of writing a composition.

#### **5.4 Suggestion for Further Research**

This study is a preliminary research on error analysis in English compositions of English major students, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University. To shed more light on students' errors, future research should be conducted based on the following recommendations.

5.4.1 The interviewing students about the errors they make should be included in the future research to find out more causes why the students make those errors.

5.4.2 Error analysis in other universities should be conducted in order to compare the students' levels of English proficiency across these universities to

subsequently make lessons and teaching/learning materials more appropriate to help lead students to acquire mastery of the English language.

5.4.3 This study was conducted on a small number of students, and also on a very limited number of compositions. Therefore, the conclusions reached might be far from being decisive. The further research should set the pace for other studies which would cover a bigger number of students.

In conclusion, the findings will be as a guideline for teachers and students in developing and improving their writing skills based on the error analysis and error correction.