



An Analysis of Morphological Errors in Different Types of Paragraph Writing Made by Thai University Students

Khomsin Sarntong

¹ Assistant Professor, Foreign Language Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand

*Corresponding author's email: khomsinsarntongsnu@gmail.com

Abstract

The purposes of this study were 1) to identify types and characteristics of morphological errors in students' paragraph writing, 2) to identify number of errors, ranks and percentage of morphological errors in students' paragraph writing, and 3) to compare the errors among five types of paragraphs. The participants were 32 English major students studying in a Thai university. The data used in this study were 160 students' paragraphs. For the data collection, the participants were required to write five types of paragraph namely expository, descriptive, narrative, comparative/contrastive and opinion paragraph, and then all pieces of writing were collected. The paragraphs were analyzed to find errors made by students to explore types, frequencies, percentages and ranks. The results showed that the total of morphological errors was 831 items. The types of errors included 9 errors with 32 characteristics. The error types were determiners, verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, modal/auxiliaries, pronouns, gerund/infinitives, and prepositions. The main characteristics were errors of misformation, omission, addition, and misselection. Determiners, verbs, nouns and were the three most frequent errors. Moreover, it was found that different types of paragraph have different types and characteristics of errors, but some types of paragraph share similarities of errors.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Morphological Errors, Paragraph Writing



1. Introduction

Writing is a production skill that requires different aspects of knowledge to produce a piece of paper. Writers must know different types of writing as each type has a different purpose. For example, an expository writing aims to give information to readers while an opinion writing aims to express writers' opinion or even to convince the readers to do something. Moreover, writers must learn how to make their writing coherent and unity. Process of writing is also essential as it helps them to brainstorm and organize ideas before they write, and then they produce a first draft, make revision and edition of the draft.

English writing is very essential in the university level. Students are required to study many courses of English writing and they must enhance writing skills in order to apply the skills in different writing genres. Paragraph is another type of writing that after students are able to produce different sentence structures, they can move to it. To produce a paragraph, they are required to write a topic sentence, supporting details and a concluding sentence (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). The paragraph must have correct grammar. Especially, after they finish writing a paragraph and have it revision, they have to edit the paragraph to correct some grammatical errors. For examples, they might use wrong subject-verb agreements and the tense use is not correct.

Nevertheless, in order to write a good paragraph, errors always occur when learners are learning English as a foreign language. Due to the differences of grammar and sentence structures between the native language and the target language, learners always make errors when they produce a piece of writing. Researchers have conducted many studies to investigate errors of university students' writing to find types of grammatical errors (Preeyanuch, Varasarin, & Brudhiprabha, 2017; Suvarnamani, 2017; Dan, Duc and Chau, 2018; Pongsukvajchakul, 2019; Chintaradeja, 2020). The studies have shown the results of types, frequencies and ranks of errors. The types of errors included morphological errors such noun errors, verb errors, prepositions errors, and syntactical errors such as sentence fragments and punctuations. Some studies investigated causes of errors including the causes of interlanguage and intralanguage.

In the context of Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University, English major students are required to take two courses on writing paragraphs and essays. The first course requires them to write five types of paragraph including exposition, description, comparison and contrast, narration and opinion. However, they encounter a lot of obstacles when producing a piece of writing. As their background knowledge of English is poor, they rely too much on using the internet to help them write. Thus, this causes grammatical errors in their paragraphs. Moreover, although they have passed some grammar courses, they cannot apply the knowledge from the previous courses to use in their writing, and grammar is still problematic for them to overcome.

Therefore, this study was aimed to investigate types of morphological errors found in the students' paragraphs, to explore the number of error items, percentages and ranks of morphological errors found in the students' paragraphs, and to compare the error types, number of error items, percentages and ranks among five types of paragraph including expository, description,



comparison and contrast, narration and opinion. Although many studies investigated the types of grammatical errors in the university level, there was no study conducted to examine more errors in different types of paragraphs. The previous studies mostly dealt with only a single genre of writing and limited topics. Therefore, this study tried to fill the gaps to find out more types of errors in more different types of writing, namely expository, description, narration, comparison/contrast and opinion. Also, the significance of the study was that the results were used as the guidelines for teachers to design grammatical teaching materials. Moreover, students can learn from their own errors and compare the errors and the correct ones.

2. Research Methodology

This section included participants, data collection and data analysis as follows.

2.1 Participants

The participants were 32 first year English major students, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakon Nakhon Rajabhat University. They were studying in the course of English Writing 1, Section 2, the second semester, academic year of 2019. Previously, they had passed Forms and Usage in English 1 course in the first semester, and they were studying Forms and Usage in English 2 course.

2.2 Data Collection

The data employed in this study were 160 paragraphs written by 32 students in the course of English Writing 1 in the second semester. The students' paragraphs included five types namely expository, comparative/contrastive, description, narrative and opinion. The paragraph length was at least 150 words, and it must have a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence. The data was collected as the following steps.

1. The study began between the ninth week to the thirteenth week of the second semester, academic year of 2019.
2. In each session of the week, the participants learned about the definition and characteristics of each type of paragraph in the first period of the class (50 minutes). Then they were assigned to write their own paragraph as the first draft in the second period of the class (50 minutes).



| Session | Types of Paragraph | Instructions |
|----------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1 (week 9) | Expository | Write a paragraph to describe characteristics of a career |
| 2 (week 10) | Comparison/Contrast | Write a paragraph to compare or contrast two things. |
| 3 (week 11) | Description | Write a paragraph to describe your favourite place. |
| 4 (week 12) | Narration | Write a paragraph to narrate an event in your life. |
| 5 (week 13) | Opinion | Write a paragraph to express your opinion about an issue or things. |

3. In order to obtain the real performance of the participants, they were not allowed to use any dictionary or electronic devices. Moreover, they were not permitted to ask their classmates.

4. After the participants finished their writing in each session, all pieces of writing were collected by the researcher for further analysis.

2.4 Data Analysis

The errors were analyzed based on Corder (1974)'s model including sampling collection, error identification, and error description. In the first step of sampling collection, after the participants finished writing a paragraph in each session, all pieces of writing were collected and photocopied. For error identification, the photocopied pieces of writing were given to the co-teacher. In case that there were some uncertain grammatical errors, the co-teacher and the researcher discussed for solution. The data were analyzed by the researcher and co-teacher to identify errors individually. Lastly, to classify the errors, the identified errors were categorized into types and sub-types which the framework was adapted from Dulay et al. (1982) and James (1998), the results of grammatical errors were presented in terms of frequencies, percentages, and ranks.

3. Results and Discussion

The results and discussion were presented as follows.

3.1 Types and Characteristics of Morphological Errors

Types of characteristics of morphological errors were shown in the following table.



Table 1: Types and Characteristics of Morphological Errors

| Error Types | Characteristics |
|-------------|---|
| 1. Noun | 1.1) Misformation of noun Example: ..., so I went home with a <i>feel</i> so sad. Correction: ..., so I went home with a sad <i>feeling</i> . |
| | 1.2) Misformation of Singular/Plural noun Example: My favorite coffee shop during <i>holiday</i> ... Correction: My favorite coffee shop during <i>holidays</i> ... |

Table 1: Types and Characteristics of Morphological Errors (continued)

| Error Types | Characteristics |
|----------------------|--|
| | 1.3) Misselection of Noun Example: There is a large <i>bear</i> ... Correction: There is a large <i>doll</i> ... |
| 2. Pronoun | 2.1) Misselection of Pronoun Example: I think <i>us</i> should stop eating ice because it is not good for health. Correction: I think <i>we</i> should stop eating ice because it is not good for health. |
| 3. Verb | 3.1) Misformation of Subject-Verb Agreement Example: Supermarkets and markets' differences <i>is</i> options. Correction: Supermarkets and markets' differences <i>are</i> options. |
| | 3.2) Misformation of Verb with Gerund/Infinitive Example: My sister <i>to be</i> driving the car. Correction: My sister <i>was</i> driving the car. |
| | 3.3) Misformation of Verb in Present Tense Example: It <i>was</i> located near the temple. Correction: It <i>is</i> located near the temple. |
| | 3.4) Misformation of Verb in Past Tense Example: Five minutes later, my sister came to me and <i>take</i> me went to the hotel. Correction: Five minutes later, my sister came to me and <i>took</i> me went to the hotel. |
| | 3.5) Misformation of Verb after Modal/auxiliary Example: ..., but the people should <i>to avoid</i> eating frozen food. Correction: ..., but the people should <i>avoid</i> eating frozen food. |
| | 3.6) Misselection of Verb Example: It <i>had</i> fun and very excited. Correction: It <i>was</i> fun and very excited. |
| 4. Gerund/infinitive | 4.1) Omission of "to" in Infinitive Example: My bedroom is the place spend most time. Correction: My bedroom is the place <i>to</i> spend most time. |



| | |
|--------------------|---|
| | 4.2) Misformation of Gerund/infinitive Example: <i>Use</i> a bus to travel can save you money on fuel. Correction: <i>Using</i> a bus to travel can save you money on fuel. |
| 5. Modal/Auxiliary | 5.1) Addition of Modal/Auxiliary Example: I remind myself all time that I <i>should must</i> be punctual. Example: I remind myself all time that I <i>must</i> be punctual. |
| | 5.2) Omission of Modal/Auxiliary Example: You recommend a room to impress guests. Correction: You <i>should</i> recommend a room to impress guests. |
| | 5.3) Misselection of Modal/Auxiliary Example: You <i>could</i> travel to three places. Correction: You <i>can</i> travel to three places |
| 6. Adjective | 6.1) Omission of Adjective Example: There is a window to make my room not. Correction: There is a window to make my room not <i>dark</i> . |

Table 1: Types and Characteristics of Morphological Errors (continued)

| | |
|----------------|---|
| | 6.2) Misformation of Adjective Example: In conclusion, my room in dormitory makes me feel <i>enjoy</i> and comfortable. Correction: In conclusion, my room in dormitory makes me feel <i>enjoyable</i> and comfortable. |
| | 6.3) Misselection of Adjective Example: Students might be <i>scared</i> to talk to the teacher. Correction: Students might be <i>afraid</i> to talk to the teacher. |
| 7. Adverb | 7.1) Addition of Adverb Example: I like to take my feet to the carpet <i>always</i> . Correction: I like to take my feet to the carpet. |
| | 7.2) Omission of Adverb Example: After ride a bicycle will make you sleep. Correction: After ride a bicycle will make you sleep <i>well</i> . |
| | 7.3) Misformation of Adverb Example: I can sleep <i>comfortable</i> on bed so soft. Correction: I can sleep <i>comfortably</i> on bed so soft. |
| | 7.4) Misselection of Adverb Example: I feel happy to be <i>here</i> . Correction: I feel happy to be <i>there</i> . |
| 8. Preposition | 8.1) Addition of Preposition Example: When the sun is down near <i>with</i> Khong River ... Correction: When the sun is down near <i>with</i> Khong River ... |
| | 8.2) Omission of Preposition Example: Phoohuaesan has very beautiful view the morning. Correction: Phoohuaesan has very beautiful view <i>in</i> the morning. |



| | |
|---------------|---|
| | 8.3) Misselection of Preposition Example: There is my family picture <i>in</i> the refrigerator. Correction: There is my family picture <i>on</i> the refrigerator. |
| 9. Determiner | 9.1) Addition of Article Example: Third, Srampangtong is <i>a</i> famous. Correction: Third, Srampangtong is famous. |
| | 9.2) Omission of Article Example: There is medium bed in my bedroom. Correction: There is <i>a</i> medium bed in my bedroom. |
| | 9.3) Misselection of Article Example: ...and in <i>a</i> middle of the desk is a laptop. Correction: ...and in <i>the</i> middle of the desk is a laptop. |
| | 9.4) Addition of Demonstrative Example: The first difference is <i>that</i> height. Correction: The first difference is height. |
| | 9.5) Omission of Quantifier Example: I apply facial cream before go to bed. Correction: I apply <i>some</i> facial cream before go to bed. |
| | 9.6) Misselection of Quantifier Example: A house has <i>much</i> rooms. Correction: A house has <i>many</i> rooms. |

From the above table, it was found that the morphological errors included 9 error types and 31 error characteristics. The error types included nouns, pronouns, verbs, gerunds and infinitives, modals and auxiliary verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and determiners. Four main characteristics were found namely addition, omission, misformation, misselection.

The error types and characteristics indicated that Thai students still had problems in writing in the level of words and phrases. To illustrate, misformation errors were found almost in all types of errors. This indicated that word forms were still problematic in English writing. Secondly, misselection error were found in most of error types as vocabulary size of the students might be limited and the usage of each part of speech was different between the students' native language and the target language. Therefore, they usually selected wrong words while producing a piece of writing. The errors found in this study were similar to Preeyanuch, Varasarin and Brudhiprabha's (2017) study. However, some types of errors like future tense error were not found in this study because all five types of writing may not need to have students write in the future tense. The types of morphological errors were often addressed by many researchers including parts of speech, which was the fundamental units that students had to master and were able to use them when they were about to write. This errors were commonly made by the students. However, some researchers may focus on a higher level like syntactical errors, which may have different results from this study.

3.2 Number of Error Items, Percentages, and Ranks

The number of error items, percentages and ranks of morphological errors found in the students' paragraphs were shown in the following table.

Table 2: Numbers of Error Items, Percentages and Ranks

| Rank | Types and Characteristics | Error Items | Percentage |
|------|--|--|------------|
| 1 | Determiner Errors - Addition of article - Omission of article - Misselection of article - Addition of demonstrative - Omission of quantifier - Misselection of quantifier | 251 (12) (217) (6) (7) (3) (6) | 30.2 |
| 2 | Verb Errors - Misformation of Subject-Verb Agreement - Misformation of Verb in Present tense - Misformation of Verb in Past Tense - Misformation of Verb after modal/auxiliary - Misselection of Verb | 221 (64) (17) (81) (22) (37) | 26.59 |
| 3 | Noun Errors - Misformation of noun - Misformation of Singular/Plural noun - Misselection of Noun | 127 (11) (104) (12) | 15.28 |
| 4 | Preposition Errors - Addition of Preposition - Omission of Preposition - Misselection of Preposition | 73 (14) (26) (33) | 8.78 |
| 5 | Gerund / infinitive errors - Omission of "to" in infinitive - Misformation of gerund/infinitive | 53 (13) (40) | 6.37 |

Table 2: Numbers of Error Items, Percentages and Ranks (continued)

| | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------|------|
| 6 | Adjective Errors - Omission of adjective - Misformation of adjective - Misselection of adjective | 40 (12) (27) (1) | 4.81 |
| 7 | Pronoun Errors - Misselection of Pronoun | 26 (26) | 3.12 |
| 8 | Modal/Auxiliary errors - Addition of modal/auxiliary - Omission of modal/auxiliary - Misselection of modal/auxiliary | 24 (6) (6) (12) | 2.88 |



| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|------|
| 9 | Adverb Errors - Addition of Adverb - Omission of Adverb - Misformation of Adverb - Misselection of Adverb | 16 (4) (3) (5) (4) | 1.92 |
| Total Number of Morphological Errors | | 831 | |

From the above table, it was found that the total number of morphological errors was 831 items. In terms of types of errors with most frequency, it was found that determiner errors were the most frequent type of errors with 251 errors items (30.2 percent). The second most frequent errors were verb errors with 221 error items (26.59 percent). The third most frequent errors were noun errors with 127 error items (15.28 percent). The least frequent errors were pronoun errors with 26 error items (3.12 percent), modal/auxiliary errors with 24 error items (2.88 percent) and adverb errors with 146 error items (1.92 percent), respectively.

In terms of characteristics, it was found that misformation had the highest number of errors (371 errors). The second highest number of characteristic errors was omission (280 errors). Misselection and addition were the third and the fifth highest number of characteristic errors (137 and 43 errors), respectively. The most frequent error was omission of an article with 217 error items. The second most frequent error was misformation of singular/plural form with 104 error items. The third most frequent error was misformation of verb form in the past tense with 81 error items. The characteristics with less than 10 error items were misselection of adjective, omission of apostrophe's, addition of adverb, omission of adverb, misformation of adverb, misselection of adverb, addition and omission of modal/auxiliary, misselection of article, addition of demonstrative, omission of quantifier and misselection of quantifier.

The results indicated that certain types of morphological errors namely, determiners, verbs and nouns showed a significant number of errors than other types of errors. This correlated with the study of Chintaradeja (2020) and Pongsukvajchakul's (2019) which showed that verb form errors and noun form errors had the highest number of errors. Also, the results were correlated with the study of Preeyanuch, Varasarin and Brudhiprabha (2017), which found that the two most frequently found errors were singular/plural errors, article errors. The results implied that some morphological errors occur when the native language and the target language are different. For example, Thai has only one form of a verb and a noun, whereas English language has different forms of verbs and nouns and especially doesn't have morphological units like determiners to put in front of a certain type of nouns. Meanwhile, some parts of speech that were found to have a small number of errors may not need in writing certain types of writing.



In terms of characteristics, this study correlated with the study conducted by Pongsukvajchakul (2019) found that misinformation and omission had more errors than addition and substitution. The native language of the participants and the target language was different in terms of word forms. Therefore, the participants with poor grammatical knowledge often made errors while they were writing, especially noun forms and verb forms.

3.3 Morphological Errors in Different Types of Paragraph

The morphological errors found among different types of paragraph namely exposition, description, comparison and contrast, narration and opinion were shown in the following table.

Table 3: Morphological Errors in Different Types of Paragraph

| Morphological Errors | Exposition | Narration | Description | Comparison/ Contrast | Opinion |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 1) Nouns | 50 | 7 | 13 | 36 | 21 |
| 2) Pronouns | 3 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 14 |
| 3) Verb | 51 | 85 | 17 | 45 | 23 |
| 4) Gerund/ infinitive | 14 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 13 |
| 5) Modal/Auxiliary | 9 | 9 | - | 1 | 5 |
| 6) Adjectives | 9 | 12 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| 7) Adverbs | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| 8) Prepositions | 19 | 17 | 24 | 6 | 7 |
| 9) Determiners | 42 | 21 | 98 | 69 | 21 |
| Total | 201 | 172 | 171 | 173 | 114 |

From the table above, it was found that exposition has the highest number of errors (201 errors). The second, third, fourth, and fifth highest types of paragraph were comparison and contrast (173 errors), narration (172 errors), description (171 errors), and opinion paragraph (114 errors), respectively. In terms of noun errors, expository was found to have the highest number of errors (50 errors), whereas narration has the least number of errors. In terms of verb errors, narration was found to have the highest number of errors (85 errors) while description had the lowest number of errors (17 errors). In terms of preposition errors, it was found that the description had the highest number of errors (24 errors) while comparison and contrast had the lowest number of errors (6 errors). Lastly, in terms of determiner errors, it was found that description had the highest number of errors (98 errors.), whereas narration had the lowest number of errors (21 errors).



The results showed that different types of paragraph have different types and characteristics of errors, but some types of paragraph share similarities of errors. For the similarities of morphological errors according to the five types of paragraph, using verbs was problematic among four types of paragraph namely an expository paragraph, a narrative paragraph, a comparative/contrastive paragraph and an opinion paragraph. Particularly, a narrative paragraph had the highest number of verb errors as this genre concerned with using past tense. For a descriptive paragraph, it was found to contain the least verb errors because there were certain verbs used to describe a place, which were verb “be” and “have”. In contrast, the students had problems in using determiners and nouns in a descriptive paragraph and a comparative/contrastive paragraph as they were required to mention about nouns which contained things and places. Therefore, missing of determiners and misformation of nouns were commonly found in these two genres. The other types of errors were not much different among these five types of paragraph.

4. Conclusion

The purposes of this study were to examine morphological errors of students’ paragraph writing, especially in five types of paragraph. The types and characteristics of errors varied according to types of paragraph. Some error types were commonly found in a certain type of paragraph, whereas some other error types were found in other types of paragraph. The results indicated that certain types of morphological errors namely, determiners, verbs and nouns showed a significant number of errors than other types of errors. It implied that these morphologies were very different from the mother tongue. Thai does not have different forms of verbs and nouns, and especially it doesn’t have morphological units like determiners to put in front of a certain type of nouns. Meanwhile, some parts of speech that were found to have a small number of errors may not need in writing certain types of paragraph. This study suggests some implications of the results that certain types of errors may need more attention to teaching the use of morphological units. For examples, using different forms of verbs and tenses are essential in effectively producing a narrative paragraph while using prepositions is important in descriptive writing. Secondly, giving examples of corrections are very crucial to reflex students’ own errors. Learning from common mistakes may help students recognize their errors and be aware of what is correct and incorrect, so they may not make the same mistakes. Third, errors can be used as exercises to help students correct the mistakes. They can practice editing paragraph examples. After that, they can do self-editing with their own piece of writing to minimize errors as many as possible. For the recommendations, further studies should investigate the types and characteristics of syntactical errors such sentence fragments and run-on sentences. Moreover, further studies should interview students to identify the causes of errors. Lastly, errors in another level such as essay writing are recommended to be studied as it contains multiple paragraphs so that they might reveal other types and characteristics of errors.



5. References

- Chintaradeja, P. (2020). An Error Analysis in Paragraph Writing in Academic Writing Class of Thai Undergraduate Students, Rajamangala University of Technology. *Journal of Education, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus*, 31(2), 64-76.
- Corder, S. P. (1974). The Significance of Learner's Errors. In Richard, J. C. (ed.). *Perspective on Second Language Acquisition*. London: Longman Group Limited.
- Dan, T. C., Duc, V. M., & Chau, P. T. H. (2018). An Investigation into Common Mistakes in Paragraph Writing of the First-year English-majored Students: A Case Study in Can Tho University, Vietnam. *Journal of Education Naresuan University*, 19(4), 308-330.
- Dulay, H. W., Burt, M., & Krashen, S. (1982). *Language two*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press
- James, C. (1998). *Errors in language learning and use*. London: Longman.
- Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2006). *Writing academic English*. 4th Edition. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Preeyanuch, P., Varasarin, P., & Brudhiprabha, P. (2017). An analysis of grammatical errors in English writing of Thai university students. *HRD Journal*, 8(1), 93-104.
- Pongsukvajchakul, P. (2019). Error Analysis in English Paragraph Writings of Thai University Students. *Udon Thani Rajabhat University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(2), 141-155.
- Suvarnamani, S (2017). A Study of Grammatical and Lexical Errors in Descriptive Writing of First Year Arts Students at Silpakorn University. *Silpakorn University Journal of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts*, 17(2), 239-264.