Email Writing Problems and Strategies Used to Solve the Problems by Thai Employees Communicating with Native and Non-Native English Speakers in an International Workplace

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the English email writing problems and strategies used to solve the problems by Thai employees in communication with native and non-native English speakers in an international workplace in Bangkok, Thailand. It was also conducted to see whether or not there were any significant differences between the problems encountered and strategies used by both groups. The participants were 100 Thai employees working in an international company based in Bangkok, Thailand. This part aimed to address a descriptive analysis of the research findings according to the five research questions. The researchers analyzed and calculated data using Mean Score (M), Standard Deviation (SD), and a t-test analysis. The results of the analysis of both groups of Thai employees were displayed in terms of their responses to each of the research questions. They were randomly selected from departments that their employees exchanged e-mail messages with both native and non-native speakers of English. A questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect the data. The results revealed that Thais employees communicating with non-native speakers of English had variety of problems than those who communicated with native speakers of English but level of strategies used were difference between both groups. This study provides guidance for Thai employees to improving their performance in terms of using email communication in the business context by reducing the time wasted by non-effective email writing. These findings may benefit Thai employees in both private and public organization to improve their level of English proficiency for both the ASEAN community and global labor market

Keywords : *email, email writing problems, email writing strategies, Thai employees, native speakers of English, non-native speakers of English, international company*

Introduction

In order to participate in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), Thai people are expected to use English to communicate effectively with native and non-native speakers of English, rather than the native languages spoken in each of the ASEAN nations. This will provide Thais with better opportunities to work in international companies; many of which are seeking to establish offices in Thailand due to comparatively lower labor costs. Today, the number of non-native speakers of English far exceeds the number of native speakers in the business world (Pastora & Calderonba, 2012). In terms of global business and international trade, English has become a necessity for professionals who wish to work for international companies. It is required for meetings and communication among people from different cultural and language groups (Rogerson, 2007). Therefore, Thais should at least develop a functional command of English in order to survive and prosper in the business world.

Nowadays, email is the most widely used form of communication in organizational settings. Most workplaces prefer email as a channel or a medium of business communication. The benefit of email is that it can be composed, edited, appended, and conveyed to many people simply by clicking a mouse. Email is also synchronized, for example, unlike a telephone conversation, the participants do not need to communicate at the same time because emails can be sent and received at different times. In recent years, emails have come to replace telephone calls and live meetings as the most popular form of workplace communication (Balter, 1998). Email software has also become an efficient filing cabinet system. Information can be filtered, stored, sorted and searched for messages and attachments by employees. It is also possible to search for information more rapidly and effectively than it is with paper-based memos (Hill, 2009.

Emails are ideally suited for business purposes, especially for people who live in different regions and time zones. They are particularly useful for employees and employers in terms of achieving their business targets and effectively performing their duties (Muhl, 2003). For instance, employees who work in multinational companies and need to communicate with people in different time zones are able to achieve this despite the time difference. They can also send documents, files, and photographs (Flynn, 2003). Furthermore, there are no limitations for emails in terms of time and place as well as the fact that these messages cannot be lost, unlike a letter, which needs to be physically copied and filed (Dick & Davies, 1995).

In Thailand, as in many other countries, emails are more convenient and more commonly used than surface mail. Furthermore, unlike a conventional letter, emails are instantly transmitted to the sender, and unlike international telephone calls, e-mails are cost-effective (Flynn, 2003). Besides, emails can be easier than face-to-face communication, especially if they are non-native English speakers communicating in English, which can lead to difficulties and misunderstandings (Dick & Davies, 1995).

The English email writing problems of non-native speakers.

In business, email writing is a significant tool for international communication. Email has become the most popular and practical method of workplace communication, preferable to many than live or face-to-face conversations or meetings. Email writing is one of the most important communication tools and users should be highly organized in order to extract the key details from large amounts of information (Balter, 1998).

Furthermore, according to Siripraparat (2011), Thai employees in an international setting were asked questions concerning their problems with business English email writing. They claimed that they found reading to be time consuming and that due to the lack of verbal cues, misunderstandings arose and effective communication was hindered. In addition, there were some Thai employees who found composing or writing emails to be time consuming because they spent time reviewing their grammar, word choice, and sentence structure. On the other hand, others disagreed and claimed that they did not use the proper grammar or an appropriate tone for business emails. Also, the content of these emails included jargon, which they could understand with the right educational background and good fundamental English skills.

Pastor and Calderon (2012) examined the lexical variations in the email writing of non-native employees who learned English as a Second Language (ESL) and non-native speakers who used English as a Foreign Language (EFL), worked in a global office and communicated with native English speakers. The results of the study revealed that the writers who used EFL had more problems than those who used ESL. This may be due to a number of cultural and sociolinguistic influences. These problems were experienced by non-native speakers who used EFL, as follows: complex noun phrases, compound sentences, creating new words through imitation of their mother tongue,

discourse variation, lexical features, variations in their use of English, poor linguistic production, and direct and imperative writing styles.

In Thailand, there have been several studies which confirm the notion that Thai employees commonly make errors when writing emails for business purposes. For instance, one study revealed that the Thai administrative staff at an International School made frequent grammatical errors when writing emails due to a lack of background knowledge of English grammar (Nutpoung, 2013). The six main difficulties experienced by Thai staff in terms of grammar were identified as (a) English grammatical structures: (b) tenses and subject-verb agreement; (c) sentence fragments, auxiliaries; (d) interrogative sentences; (f) Thai particles; (g) plural nouns. These grammatical errors caused problems for the Thai administrative staff because English is a foreign language and they were unaware of having made any errors and demonstrated a minimal knowledge of English grammar in their email writing. The wording and the level of formality that they used in their email writing were both informal. Also, they did not spend much time on email writing, which caused their messages to be concise. Therefore, this study is concerned with the importance of increasing the English grammatical knowledge of Thai administrative staff. It is also necessary for them to realize that a lack of grammatical knowledge may lead to miscommunication.

Other studies have revealed that grammatical errors can also be found in business emails among Thais studying English as a foreign language (Sirijorn, 2013). These errors included the following: (a) punctuation usage; (b) comma splices; (c) subject-verb agreement; (d) verb tense; (e) spelling; (f) prepositions; and (g) fragments and sentence structure, respectively. In addition, the contributing factors to the participants experiencing difficulty with business email writing were (a) vocabulary knowledge; (b) limited writing time; (c) the expectations of the readers; (d) active-passive voice adjectives; (e) compound sentences; (f) punctuation usage; (g) nouns; (h) preposition usage; (i) types of messages; (j) comma splices; and (k) fragments.

Patterson (2015) revealed that the forms of greetings and closings used in English email writing by non-native English writers who use English as a Second or as a Foreign Language to communicate with managers in international company. The findings of this study explored the idea that informal language is acceptable in business emails with regard to certain cultures and nationalities. Furthermore, most of them are more likely to use their own style of writing in order to help readers understand their meaning. However, one of the objects of this research was to confirm whether or not they used formal language in their business email writing for the same reason. In addition, cultural awareness in an intercultural business setting should consist of an awareness of the appropriateness of the language used in business emails.

It can be concluded that non-native English speakers seem to have difficulty with writing emails in English. The main problems appear to be grammatical, a lack of appropriate vocabulary, and problems with clarity of expression, cultural awareness, the time consuming nature of composing emails, the relationship between the sender and receiver, their position in organization, the use of slang, unclear messages, run-on sentences, writing style and the level of formality.

The strategies used to solve the problem in English email writing.

According to Siripraparat (2011) claimed that the Thai employees who work in international organizations agreed that obtaining training, the revision of emails and using a grammar and/or spelling checker were useful for Thai employees when writing emails in English because these factors may result in greater levels of productivity and efficiency. For example, these employees should use a conversational tone when writing business English emails.

As a result, this type of support contributes to a significant reduction of errors in emails and help to improve the level of communication among Thai employees in an international workplace.

Moreover, according to Wongworawan (2011), three email writing strategies are used by Thai employees to write effective emails, including the direct approach or to get to the point in their message and make it clear. The indirect approach was applied when they wanted to inform the recipients of some bad news. They also preferred to provide the reason at the beginning of message. Lastly, the findings of this persuasive approach were employed when writing to management in order to gain their approval. The supporting documents and additional data were attached to the messages.

Generally, the main purpose of the email writing is for the sender to effectively transmit the message to the reader(s). While many Thai workers use the modern and standard e-mail writing styles, some still use inappropriate or outdated formats and writing styles (Sangthong, 2013). As a consequence, training in business email writing should be provided for Thai employees in international companies to increase their knowledge and enhance their email writing skills by using the most up-to-date formats and styles. Other types of writing courses are also essential for both teachers and learners who are non-native English speakers and need to improve their writing skills (Chenna et. al., 2013).

Similarly, Thammasorn & Somsin (2013) studied the opinions of the Thai staff of the Faculty of Management at an unnamed university, who agreed that reviewing can reduce the rate of errors in email or letter writing. In additional, practicing English writing every day and receiving training from a good instructor will be helpful in terms of their respective backgrounds and levels of English proficiency.

Al-Afnan (2014) also mentioned that the most direct politeness strategies were used by close colleagues, regardless of their position. On the contrary, negative politeness was used with distant colleagues. This implication revealed that the factor of ethnicity influences the choice of politeness strategy.

In conclusion, writing strategies are a useful technique to deal with the difficulties of email writing, especially for non-native English speakers. In addition, writing strategies refer to the guidelines or instructions used by a writer to solve communication problems and effectively examine their writing skills. Additionally, these strategies may not decrease the amount of time used to write emails, but rather increase levels of efficiency and productivity instead.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the English email communication problems and strategies used by Thai employees in international companies when writing emails in English. Besides, this research attempted to explore whether or not there were any significant differences between the strategies used to communicate in English via email. Consequently, the findings of the study may be useful for the writers or learners who need to improve their own English competency and for the organization to provide more specific training courses for their employees.

Research Questions

1. What were the problems experienced by Thai employees at an international company in terms of communicating through email with native and non-native English speakers?

2. What were the strategies used by Thai employees at international company to solve problems with communicating through email with native and non-native English speakers?

3. Were there any significant differences between the English email writing problems experienced by Thai employees at an international company in terms of communicating through email with native and non-native English speakers?

4. Were there any significant differences between the English email writing strategies used by Thai employees to communicate with native English speakers and non-native English speakers?

Research Methodology

Selection of the company.

The researchers selected one of the largest petroleum companies in the world, which conformed to the requirements of an international workplace to participate in the study. This company has an office located in Bangkok, Thailand, and currently provides services for global affiliates. Both native and non-native English speaking countries are represented in the international workplace, such as, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, Singapore, and Malaysia. English is the core language used in this company for communication purposes and a variety of other functions. Also, one of the researchers had access to in order to facilitate data collection.

Selection of the participants.

The participants of this study were 100 Thai employees from the selected international company, and they were selected to participate in the study based on a variety of functions of their performance. The participants consisted of two groups, 50 Thai employees who communicated with native speakers of English and 50 Thai employees communicating with non-native speakers of English. The participants depended on the willingness to participate in this study.

Instrumentation.

The key instrument used in this research was a survey developed by the researchers. The participants were questioned about their demographic information, their educational background, their years of work experience, the problems they encountered and the strategies they used to solve these problems when communicating with foreign colleagues.

Data collection procedures.

The questionnaire was distributed to participants in November 2015. A letter of consent were attached to the questionnaire. The questionnaires were returned to the researchers after a period of two weeks, in order to give the participants enough time to complete the questionnaire.

Data Analysis.

The findings were presented in tables and figures with full explanations of the descriptive analysis. Any information referring to the general background of the participants was presented in the form of a percentage. A five-point Likert scale was used to score the participant's level of agreement. The levels of agreement among the participants regarding their English email writing problems and writing strategies were analyzed in terms of a mean score (M) and standard deviation (SD). A high mean score indicated a higher level of problems with English email communication and an increased use of problem-solving strategies, while a lower mean score indicated fewer problems with English email writing and a decreased use of problem-solving strategies. A t-test was administered in order to investigate whether or not there were any significant differences between the problems they had and strategies they used.

Findings and Discussions

The first section recorded descriptive analysis and general information about 100 participants, who were Thai employees who worked with native and non-native speakers of English in an international company, including factors such as concerning age, educational background, genders and work experience. The researchers identified the number of items and then calculated them into a percentage. The data were presented as shown in Table 1.

As illustrated in Table 1, the majority of the sampled employees in this international company were female (76 %). Only 24% of the Thai employees were male. In terms of educational background, most of them held a Bachelor's degree from Thailand (48%), followed by a Master's degree from Thailand (33%), a Master's degree from another country (16%), a Bachelor's degree from another country (2%), and miscellaneous others (1%). In addition, in terms of their years of work experience in this company, most of them had over 6 years (62%), followed by two to three years (19%), four to five years (12%), and less than 1 year (7%). Regarding their function or division, most of the participants were from the Bangkok Payables Center (36%), Lubricants and Supply Distribution (28%), Procurement (16%), Information and Technology Services Center (10%), Human Resources (8%), and others (2%). In terms of the countries that the Thai employees were responsible for, 50% communicated with native English speakers, and 50% with non-native English speakers. The native English speaking countries included in this study were the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand.

The non-native speaking countries included Canada, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and China.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 100)

Demographic Characteristics	Number (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Male	24	24
Female	76	76
Education Background:		
Bachelor's degree (in Thailand)	48	48
Bachelor's degree (in another country)	2	2
Master's degree (in Thailand)	33	33
Master's degree (in another country)	16	16
Others	1	1
Working Experience with this Company:		
Less than 1 year	**7**	7
2-3 years	19	19
4-5 years	12	12
More than 6 years	62	62
Current Function or Division		
Bangkok Payables Center	36	36
Procurement	16	16
Information and Technology	10	10
Lubricants and Supply	28	28
Human Resources	8	8

Others	2	2
Countries that Thai Employees are Responsible for:		
Native English Speakers	50	50
Non-Native English Speakers	50	50

Results of Four Research Questions

Research Question 1.

What were the problems experienced by Thai employees at an international company in terms of communicating through email with native and non-native English speakers?

Results.

As presented in table 2, the findings revealed that Thai employees communicating with native English speaking clients agreed that they encountered only two critical problems out of the 28 problems (7%) listed in the questionnaire.

The problems encountered by this group at agree level of agreements included: (a) using the same style of writing (M = 3.52), (b) not being able to write good emails or review their own writing (M = 3.45). Moreover, this group experienced difficulty only three problems out of 28 (10%) when communicating with non-native at moderate level of agreement out included (a) concerning about cultural background of the readers (M = 2.80), (b) not being to write good emails and asked colleagues to review (M = 2.80), and (c) unable to use the idioms correctly (M = 2.74). However, the participants disagreed with the majority of the items which indicated that they did not have critical problems with the rest of the items.

In contrast, the Thai employees who communicated with non-native English speakers experienced a wider variety of problems than the first group. This group agreed that they encountered two critical problems out of 28 (7%). The most critical problems for this group were lacked of confidence and always reviewed it before sending (M = 3.88). They were also using the same style of writing (M = 3.56). Besides, they also moderately agreed that they had 9 critical problems out 0f 28 problems (32%). The most critical for this group were s (M = 3.28), as well as the fact that they were unable to write good emails message and they asked their colleagues to review before sending emails in English (M = 3.24). In terms of vocabulary usage, they encountered problems with difficulty using idioms correctly (M = 3.08), these problems included unable to selected the proper vocabulary items (M = 2.66), their inability to understand words with multiple meanings (M = 2.62). Moreover, the Thai employees also encountered problem in terms of grammar usage. They were inability to avoid repeating the same word and phrases (M = 2.72). As well as the fact that they were unable to write emails quickly and easily (M = 2.84). These problems were included inability to plan ahead or compose draft of email messages (M = 2.78) and spend a lot of time to compose composing emails (M = 2.70).

Table 2

The English Email Writing Problems Encountered by Thai Employees Communicating with Native English Speakers (Group 1, n=50) and Non-Native English Speakers (Group 2, n= 50) (N=100)

Problems	Group 1		Group 2	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Other problems				
Low confidence about emails writing always review it before sending	3.45	0.98	3.88	0.75
Using the same style of writing	3.52	0.89	3.56	0.95
Concern about the cultural background of the readers	2.80	0.9**7**	3.28	1.07
Low confidence about emails writing always ask colleague before sending	2.80	0.97	3.24	1.04
Spending a lot of time to compose emails	2.54	0.86	2.70	0.84
Vocabulary				
Unable to use the idioms correctly	2.74	1.12	3.08	0.97
Unable to write email messages quickly and easily	2.58	0.93	2.84	0.87
Unable to use and lack knowledge of common expressions and vocabulary	2.32	0.98	2.66	0.96
Unable to understand words with multiple meanings	2.32	0.91	2.62	0.90
Email Formats				
Unable to plan ahead or compose drafts when writing emails	2.54	1.15	2.78	1.00
Grammar				
Do not know how to avoid repeating the same word and phrases	2.54	0.91	2.72	0.95

Discussion : Research Question 1.

Both groups of Thai employees perceived problems with their English email writing in terms of communicating successfully with their foreign clients. However, this research explored the idea that the Thai employees communicating with non-native English speakers had a lot more problems than the group communicating with native English speakers. The most common problems found in both groups were that they lacked of confidence to write email messages, or use grammar.

Moreover, the employees communicating with non-native English speakers also had problems with their English email writing, such as insufficient knowledge of English vocabulary, vocabulary confusion because of multiple meanings, spending a lot of time composing emails, the inability to write emails quickly and properly, and concerns about the cultural background of the receivers and unable to compose the email messages. Besides, these problems could have a variety of points of origin. Firstly, Thais do not typically communicate by email in English on a daily basis. Most of them use English email writing for a specific purpose and in a specific setting only. This is especially true for government and local businesses, which prefer to use Thai for communication and other channels rather than email communication, such as verbally via telephone or emailing in Thai. Thus, this has led to insufficient practice of writing in English in their daily lives. Another reason may be that their knowledge of English writing skills

is limited to the business context. In other words, they never practice writing in any other context. Hence, the majority of Thais lack competence in English email writing. The final reason could be that Thai teachers do not teach their students up-to-date vocabulary, such as antonyms, synonyms or vocabulary items with multiple meanings. These subjects only recognized high frequency words and were unable to identify any other words when using English to communicate in emails.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies (Nutpoung, 2013; Sirijorn, 2013; Siripraparat, 2011) related to the English email writing problems encountered by Thai employees. The most general problems included: (a) grammatical errors, (b) the time used to review, (c) a lack of background knowledge of grammar, (d) an inability to use the proper words, (e) the influence of Thai language, (f) limited vocabulary knowledge, (g) the expectations of readers, and (h) using informal language. As a result, it can be concluded that the English email writing problems of these Thai employees should be addressed and improved.

Research Question 2.

What were the strategies used by Thai employees at international company to solve problems in terms of communicating through email with native and non-native English speakers?

Results.

The findings revealed that both groups of Thai employees used strategies, either avoidance, compensatory or reduction strategies. In comparing the strategies, it was found that both groups employed these strategies to overcome their English email writing problems. The most commonly strategies used at agree level of agreement by group 2 and at moderate level of agreement by group 1 were: (a) more writing practice, (b) using a spell-checking program to reduce errors, (c) consulting a dictionary for unknown words, (e) consulting online tools, (d) asking colleagues to identify unknown words, (e) using email templates, (f) attending business email writing training courses, (g) listing the most frequently misused words and (h) keeping it short and simple to reduce errors, and (g) making a list of commonly used phrases and sentences.

Furthermore, it was found that the group of Thai employees communicating with non-native English speakers applied almost all of the strategies presented in the questionnaire. It was also found that the practicing email writing in business context was employed to solve the English email writing problems of both groups of Thai employees in terms of communicating with native and non-native English speakers. In addition, the study revealed that using a spell-checking program to reduce errors and consulting a dictionary for unknown words were also used by both groups of employees in order to reduce their rate of errors. Besides, online tools and colleagues were also useful for them when they were unable to define a word. Nevertheless, Thai employees communicating with non-native English speakers asked their supervisors or managers to proofread whereas Thai employees communicating with native speakers of English failed to use this approach. Table 3 below contains all of the strategies employed by the participants to make their email communication more effective and efficient.

Table 3

The Email Writing Strategies Employed by Thai Employees Communicating with Native English Speakers (Group 1, n=50) and by Thai Employees Communicating with Non-Native English Speakers (Group 2, n=50) (N=100)

Strategies	Group 1		Group2	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Practicing writing regularly	3.54	1.21	4.02	0.87
Using a spell-checking program to reduce errors	3.30	1.31	4.02	0.87
Consulting a dictionary for unknown words	3.52	1.33	3.96	0.97
Consulting online tools	3.18	1.20	3.78	0.97
Asking colleagues to identify unknown words	3.20	1.18	3.74	0.85
Listing related vocabulary in the business context	3.06	1.11	3.68	0.91
Using a wordlist for the appropriate context	3.18	1.14	3.60	0.86
Using email templates	3.12	1.17	3.60	0.99
Making a list of commonly used phrases and sentences	2.96	1.18	3.60	0.89
Keeping it short and simple to reduce errors	3.24	1.22	3.56	1.31
Listing the most frequently misused words	3.06	1.13	3.50	0.84
Attending training courses for business email writing	3.16	1.30	3.36	1.31
Requesting supervisor/managers to review	2.26	1.05	2.64	1.00

Discussion: Research Question 2.

In order to overcome these problems, the participants should have more time to practice their English writing on a daily basis. It would also be helpful for these students to take email writing courses with a qualified instructor (Thammasorn & Somsin 2013). Moreover, the company should assign Thai staff to attend business writing classes with native English speaking instructors to improve their written communication with foreign clients or colleagues. Moreover, Thai instructors or teachers should focus on English for Specific Purposes in writing to reduce the level of word choice confusion when Thai employees write emails in a business context. This may result in Thais developing a high level of proficiency in English and increasing their level of confidence in their English email communication.

Research Question 3.

Were there any significant differences between the English email writing problems experienced by Thai employees at an international company in terms of communicating through email with native and non-native English speakers?

Result.

An independent-sample t-test was employed to compare the problems encountered by both groups of Thai employees and identified different English email writing problems in communicating with native and non-native English speakers. As indicated in Table 4, it was also found that Thai employees who communicated with non-native English speakers had variety of problems than those who communicated with native English speakers (M = 2.30 and M = 2.49). Moreover, it was found that there were not differences at a statistically significant level of 0.05 (t = 1.815, sig = .076)

These results revealed that both groups of Thai employees encountered email writing problems when communicating with native and non-native English speakers. However, the mean score indicated that employees who communicated with non-native speakers had more than employees who communicated with native English speakers.

Table 4

The t-Test Analysis: Comparison of the Problems Faced by Both Groups of Thai Employees (N=100)

Group of employees	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*Sig*
Employees communicating with Native English Speakers	50	2.30	.517		
				1.815	.076
Employees communicating with Non-Native English Speakers	50	2.49	.441		

p < .05

Discussion: Research Question 3.

With reference to the data in this study, both groups of Thai employees had different problems and The Thai employees who communicated with non-native English speakers had more problems with English email writing than any other group of Thai employees. However, the result of this study reported that the groups of employees who communicated with non-native speakers of English agreed that they had more serious problems than the group who communicating with native speakers of English. The most common problems found both groups were reviewing email before sending and using the same style of writing. Moreover, the group who communicating with non-native speakers of English agreed that they had variety of problems. These problems were included unable to write good emails message and they asked their colleagues to review before sending emails in English, difficulty using idioms correctly, unable to select the proper vocabulary items, unable to understand words with multiple meanings, grammar usage, repeating the same word and phrases, unable to write emails quickly and easily, inability to plan ahead or compose draft of email messages and spend a lot of time to compose composing emails.

In terms of the writing style, both groups of Thai employees experienced using the same style of writing when communicating with both native and non-native speakers of English. It may be their individual style of writing and it may difficult to change or improve their format. They continue using the same email writing problems when exchange email writing with both native and non-native clients.

Another reasons on the problems experienced by Thai employees was low confidence and reviewing email messages before sending. This problems might be a serious problem in terms of writing email quickly could make the productivity in a business. Regarding the email writing problems, it could be concluded that education background might have effects on the problems. Majority of Thai employees who communicating with non-native speakers of English graduated in country whereas Thai employees communicating with native speakers of English graduated from oversea.

Research Question 4.

Were there any significant differences between the English email writing strategies used by Thai employees to communicate with native English speakers and non-native English speakers?

Results.

An independent-sample t-test was employed to compare the strategies employed by both groups of Thai employees who utilized completely different strategies in terms of overcoming their email writing problems when communicating with both native and non-native English speakers. As indicated in Table 5, it was found that there were significant differences between the strategies administered to communicate with native English speakers (M =3.07, SD = .91) and non-native English speakers (M = 3.44, SD = .54). There was a statistically significant difference of 0.05 (t=2.431*, sig = .019).

These results revealed that Thai employees used different level of email writing strategies when solving communication problems with both native and non-native English speakers. However, the mean scores indicated that the employees who communicated with non-native English speakers utilized more strategies than the employees who communicated with native English speakers. Table 5 below indicates the significance of the differences between both groups of Thai employees in English email writing among native and non-native English speakers and the strategies used to solve their problems.

Table 5

The t-Test Analysis: The Strategies Used to Solve Problems by Both Group

Group of employees	Strategies to solve the problems in English email writing				
	(N=100)				
	N	M	SD	t	Sig.
Employees communicating with Native English Speakers	50	3.07	.911		
				2.431*	0.019
Employees communicating with Non-Native English Speakers	50	3.44	.542		

*p < .05

Discussion: Research Question 4.

Based on the data found in the study, both groups of Thai employees employed a variety of strategies to overcome these problems in order to achieve their business goals and reduce their error rate when writing English emails at agree and moderate level of agreement. The Thai employees in this study who communicated with native English speakers had different results in terms of the strategies used to solve their problems.

The employees who communicated with non-native English speakers used more strategies than the employees who communicated with native English speakers. There was a significant difference found between strategies used to overcome the problems by these two groups of Thai employees. These findings were similar to those of Nutpoung (2013) who claimed that English is a Foreign Language in Thailand, not a mother tongue. Therefore, the Thai employees were unaware of having made any errors and only applied a minimal knowledge of English grammar when writing emails. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that the Thai employees who communicated with non-native English speakers in this study used more the strategies to solve their problems than the group communicating with native English speakers. This indicated that the Thai employees who communicate

with foreign clients or colleagues tended to use the strategies that they personally employed when faced with English email writing problems. In addition, the group of employees who communicated with native English speakers had fewer problems than the employees from other groups. This shows a high level of a willingness to reduce errors and more effective email communication. Thai employees need to review the former before reducing their rate of errors in email or letter writing. In addition, practicing English writing daily and obtaining training from a qualified instructor would be helpful in terms of increasing their level of English proficiency.

It is advantageous for international companies to improve the abilities of their employees in terms of communicating with non-native English speakers to provide the most appropriate training course to develop them their English proficiency and effectively achieve their business targets.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings imply that in overall terms, the Thai employees in this international setting had trouble writing emails in English, particularly for a group who had to frequently communicate with non-native English speakers. They experienced a lot of problems and employed strategies to solve them before sending emails. Besides, training in business email writing should be provided for Thai employees in international companies to increase their knowledge and enhance their email writing skills by using the most up-to-date formats and styles. The participants needed training to improve their grammatical knowledge and English writing ability.   It was found that the participants used different email writing strategies to solve problems depending on their work experience. They should keep practicing English writing on a daily basis and obtain training from a qualified instructor, which should increase their level of English proficiency.

Recommendation for further study

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, there are a number of gaps in our research that follow the findings, and would benefit from further research, including a realistic evaluation to extend and further test theories which had been developed. Firstly, the participants in this study were limited to Thai employees with limited functions, who worked in an international workplace in Bangkok.   The findings were not applied to participants who were non-native speakers in various functions to take part in the research.   Secondly, the emails written by the participants should be analyzed to identify the problems with their writing in further studies.   This way, it is possible to analyze the problems in depth and identify the way to solve these problems.   Lastly, the workplace used in this study was limited to only one company. Multiple companies could be selected in further studies in order for different kinds of problems from difference areas to be identified.

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