WRITING PROBLEMS AND WRITING STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH MAJOR AND NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS IN A THAI UNIVERSITY

ปัญหาการเขียนและกลวิธีการเขียนของนักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษและนักศึกษาที่ไม่ใช่สาขาภาษาอังกฤษในมหาวิทยาลัยไทยแห่งหนึ่ง.

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การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจปัญหาหาการเขียนและสำรวจกลวิธีการเขียนของนักศึกษาระดับมหาวิทยาลัยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศในมหาวิทยาลัยของรัฐแห่งหนึ่งในประเทศไทย นอกจากนี้ยังต้องการสำรวจว่ามีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญของปัญหาการเขียนกลวิธีการเขียนระหว่างนักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษและนักศึกษาที่ไม่ใช่สาขาภาษาอังกฤษ การศึกษาครั้งนี้มีผู้เข้าร่วมจำนวน 80 คน เป็นนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 3 ประกอบด้วย นักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษและนักศึกษาที่ไม่ใช่สาขาภาษาอังกฤษ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลคือแบบสอบถามและงานเขียนระดับอนุเฉท ผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยตอบคำถามเกี่ยวกับปัญหาที่ตนพบเมื่อต้องเขียนงานเขียนภาษาอังกฤษรวมถึงตอบคำถามว่าใช้กลวิธีในการเขียนอะไรเมื่อเขียนงานเขียนอนุเฉท จากนั้นผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยได้เขียนงานเขียนอนุเฉทในหัวข้อปัญหาที่พบเมื่อเขียนงานเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ ผลการวิเคราะห์ พบว่า (1) มีความแตกต่างโดยมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติในด้านปัญหาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างนักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษกับนักศึกษาที่ไม่ใช่สาขาภาษาอังกฤษ โดยนักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษมีปัญหาน้อยกว่านักศึกษาที่ไม่ใช่สาขาภาษาอังกฤษ (2) มีความแตกต่างโดยมีนัยสำคัญในด้านปัญหาการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างนักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษกับนักศึกษาที่ไม่ใช่สาขาภาษาอังกฤษ โดยนักศึกษาที่ไม่ใช่สาขาภาษาอังกฤษมีปัญหามากกว่าในประเด็นเนื้อหาความคิด การจัดวางรูปแบบ การพัฒนาต่อยอดความคิด และการใช้ภาษา ซึ่งมากกว่านักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษ และ (3) มีความแตกต่างโดยมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติในด้านกลวิธีการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างนักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษกับนักศึกษาที่ไม่ใช่สาขาภาษาอังกฤษโดยนักศึกษาสาขาภาษาอังกฤษใช้กลวิธีการเขียนได้มากกว่านักศึกษาที่ไม่ใช่สาขาภาษาอังกฤษ

คำสำคัญ : ปัญหาการเขียน กลวิธีการเขียน งานเขียนอนุเฉท

Abstract

This study aim of this research was to investigate the writing problems and writing strategies experienced by Thai EFL university students in a public university in Thailand. It also aimed to see whether there was a significant difference between the writing problems and writing strategies experienced by English major and non-English major students. The participants were 80 third-year undergraduate students consisting of 40 English major students and 40 non-English major students. The instruments employed in this study were the Writing Problems and Strategies Questionnaire and drafts of paragraph writing. The participants were asked about their problems they encountered when writing in English and their strategies they used when they wrote a paragraph in English. Also, they were asked to write a paragraph on the topic of their problems when they were about to write in English. It was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the writing problems encountered by both groups of students. The English major students had fewer writing problems than the non-English major students. In addition, there was a significant difference in the writing problems reflected in a paragraph written by both groups of students. The non-English major students had more problems about content and ideas, organizational pattern, the development of ideas, and language use than the English major students. Finally, there was a statistically significant difference between the writing strategies used by both groups of students. The English major students used more strategies than the non-English major students.

Keywords *: Writing problems, Writing strategies, Paragraph writing*

Background of the Study

In the twenty-first century, the significance of the English language has been on the rise ever since it became the international language of communication. It can also be used as a tool to assess a repertoire of knowledge. As a result, the English language has become a compulsory course in academic institutions across the world. It is taught as both a second language and a foreign language, and students are expected to be able to use English effectively. In terms of teaching and learning, all four of the English language skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing are practiced and taught. However, in most English classes, writing is considered to the most difficult skill to acquire (Negari, 2011; Salma, 2015). In accordance with natural order hypotheses of language learning, writing comes at the end of the learning process (Javid & Umer,

2014). Regarding second or foreign language acquisition, the skills of listening, speaking, and reading are naturally acquired before the writing, the last skill to be acquired. For foreign language learners, it is more difficult to learn to write in English because of the differences in terms of linguistic features, rhetorical patterns, writing styles, and other cultural factors (Benson & Heidik, 1995, as cited in Mohamed & Zouaoui, 2014).

In spite of these difficulties, students at all educational levels need to improve their writing because it is one of the most useful and effective tools in global communication. Writing is an essential aspect of thinking and learning at the academic or tertiary level (Hammann, 2005). In addition, writing is a means of communication that enables individuals to share ideas, defend opinions, and express emotions (White & Arndt, 1991). Furthermore, writing is an important tool that allows students to learn more effectively, and to increase their understanding of what they have been taught (Voon Foo, 2007). Mohamed and Zouaoui (2014) also asserted that writing is a vital skill, and that the development of their writing skills and an increase in their confidence in terms of expressing themselves in written English may lead to professional opportunities in the future, as well as empowering learners to take on new roles as citizens within the community.

In the academic arena, university students may be required to demonstrate their knowledge of the English through the completion of written assignments (Graham & Harris, 1988). Furthermore, the demand for good writing is required in both the academic and business world, such as reports on reading, the preparation of research papers, or written examinations or essays (Gebhardt & Rodrigues, 1989).

It is clear that writing is a crucial academic skill which students need to develop in order to succeed in their future careers (Boonpattanaporn, 2008; Grabe & Kapland, 1996). In other words, writing can be considered the most important skill for English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) students to acquire and develop (Hyland, 2003). Therefore, it is necessary for writing teachers to put more effort into helping students due to the fact that writing is both a crucial skill and a difficult one to acquire. The mastery of writing skills is particularly important in the ESL/EFL context. However, writing is often problematic, particularly for ESL/EFL students and teachers, in terms of both producing and assisting struggling students with their written work (Abdel-Hack, 2002).

Writing Problems Experienced by ESL/EFL Students

Writing is often considered the most difficult skill for student writers to acquire because of the cyclical and recursive nature of the writing process (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Harris, Graham & Mason, 2003; Majid, 2007). According to White and Arndt (1991) writing is a complex cognitive process that requires a consistent intellectual effort over a considerable period of time. Similarly, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982) point out that writing is a highly complex process involving many important aspects, such as form and features, purposes and goals, organization, as well as the expectations of the audience and an evaluation of the communication. Many researchers agree that writing in the ESL/EFL context is a complex, difficult and demanding task (Al-Khairy, 2013). English writing cannot be easily acquired because ESL/EFL students need an appropriate period of time in which to develop their English skills. Moreover, they need to learn the fundamental principles of English writing in order to compose an effective and successful written product (Hyland, 2003). For teachers, writing is considered a difficult skill to teach because it includes several components: (a) a comprehensive command of grammar, (b) a grasp of spelling and punctuation, (c) the use of appropriate vocabulary, (d) a suitable style which meets the expectations of the readers, and (e) organizational skills (Musa, 2010). It is also time-consuming for teachers to read papers, to provide feedback and to ask for revision. Therefore, English writing has a tendency to be neglected in the English language classroom in language programs for both ESL/EFL students (White & Arndt, 1991).

The causes of the problems experienced by ESL/EFL students stems from a number of factors, including the inherent complexity of writing, insufficient practice, inadequate feedback, and the limitations of the knowledge of the students (Anwar, 2000). In addition, students do not write very often in the classroom, and what they produce tends to be limited to 'classroom-bound' writing practice (Bakir, 2013). The level of difficulty is significantly higher when a foreign language is involved (Mohamed & Zuoaoui, 2014). As a productive skill, writing can be considered one of the most complicated tasks for the majority of ESL/EFL students because of the differences between the linguistic and rhetorical patterns used in their first language and in second language (Kaplan, 1996). This requires ESL/EFL students to pay attention to and manage the differences between their first and their second languages (Ahmed, 2010). In academic terms, students are expected to produce coherent and well-organized written work, as well as using the most appropriate word choices, sentence structure; and most of all, successfully communicate their

ideas (Khoshima & Robain Nia, 2014).   Nevertheless, the majority of ESL/EFL students experience difficulty in meeting these requirements; for example, their essays are poorly written in terms of the content, conventions, ideas, organization, sentence structure, and vocabulary. These students also have problems with establishing and achieving their communicative goals. Indeed, producing a piece of writing, regardless of whether or not it is a paragraph or an essay, seems to be particularly problematic for ESL/EFL students because of the different rhetorical patterns used in English composition, including elements such as organization, structure, and style (Leki, 1991). Therefore, the majority of students do not find it easy to write a paragraph or an essay in English, without the assistance of writing teachers or members of the academic community that they belong to (Mohd Nor, Kim Hua, & Ibrahim, 2012).

Clearly, a solution for the aforementioned problems with writing experienced by ESL/EFL students can be found in the acquisition of essential writing skills by students. This can be achieved through teachers using the necessary techniques to develop the abilities of their students, and to equip them with the skills they need to produce acceptable and effective written communication. With regard to the teaching of writing skills, the focus has shifted from the product to the process, also known as the product-based approach. This also has also contributed to the change in writing instruction from a product-based approach to the process-based approach. This involves teachers providing more assistance during the writing process, including the pre-writing stage, the writing stage, and the post-writing stage of assigned writing activities. Zamel (1982) points out that students will develop the ability to write proficiently in English if they clearly understand and experience the process of composition.

As the process is one of the key components contributing to good writing, many scholars and researchers have identified the steps of the writing process, based on Flowers& Hayes (1981) and Bereiter and Sacardamalia (1987). Some scholars and experts on writing (e.g., Brown & Hood, 1989; Scholes & Comley, 1989; Raimes, 2005) claim that the writing process has three main stages: prewriting, drafting, and revising. Within these three stages, writers usually practice numerous writing strategies, including brain storming or quickly jotting down ideas in the prereading stage; starting writing in the drafting stage; and adding, rearranging, and checking grammar, spelling and punctuation in the revising stage. Winterowd and Murray (1988) claim that writers should proofread their work in the post-writing stage, examining each line carefully for grammatical errors, spelling, punctuation and style. Writers with a variety of writing strategies and

skills may complete their writing tasks more successfully and confidently (Gebhardt& Rodrigues, 1989).Thus, in order to develop the competence of struggling students, teachers need to provide them with strategies in order to deal with the writing process, such as drafting, planning, and revising (Tracy et.al. 2009). The students also need to be familiar with a variety of writing strategies, as well as the ability to control their own writing process.

Writing Strategies Used by ESL/EFL Students

The concepts of writing strategies are explained differently by a number of researchers and scholars. Academically, writing strategies refer to techniques that language learners or writers use to control while writing and use to improve their piece of writing via three main steps: planning, drafting/writing, and revising (Raimes, 2005). With regard to writing strategies, Cohen (1998) defined a strategy as a process which is consciously selected by learners, and which results in actions taken to enhance the learning or the use of the foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about the language. In addition, researchers and writing experts have identified four to eight stages of the writing process. Arndt (1987) maintains that writing strategies consist of eight main categories: planning, global planning, rehearsing, repeating, re-reading, questioning, revising, and editing.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the writing problems experienced by English major and non-English major Thai EFL university students when writing a paragraph in English.

2. To investigate the writing problems reflected in the paragraphs written in English by English major and non-English major Thai EFL university students.

3. To investigate the writing strategies employed by English major and non-English major Thai EFL university students during the processes of prewriting, writing, and revising when writing a paragraph in English.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is a significant difference in the writing problems experienced by English major and non-English major Thai EFL university students when writing their paragraph in English.

2. There is a significant difference in the writing problems reflected in a paragraph written in English by English major and non-English major Thai EFL university students.

3. There is a significant difference in the use of writing strategies employed by English major and non-English major Thai EFL university students during the processes of prewriting, writing, and revising when writing their paragraph in English.

Significance of the Study

This research is conducted in order to explore the writing problems and strategies used by Thai EFL students, both English and non-English majors. The study also intends to identify any writing problems revealed in paragraphs written by these students. Due to the fact that there are still many problematic issues in the Thai EFL writing context, the findings obtained from this study may provide information about the actual problems experienced by the students when writing paragraphs in English, during the three main stages of the writing process: prewriting, drafting/writing and revising. This information may be beneficial for students and writing teachers alike and in a number of ways. First, writing problems can be identified by teachers in the paragraphs composed by students, and finding the most appropriate techniques in order to enhance the quality of their writing. Teachers can also assist students with solutions to their overcoming the difficulties that they experience when writing paragraphs in English. Third, writing teachers can teach effective writing strategies to their students in order to help them improve their writing skills. Furthermore, the findings of this study could also be used as a guideline for writing instructors, course developers and researchers to develop materials for writing instruction in the EFL context.

Methodology

This study was exploratory and used a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. The quantitative data were self-report rating scales obtained from the writing problems and writing strategies questionnaires, whereas, the qualitative data were

paragraphs written by the participants, the English and non-English major students. The quantitative part aimed to investigate the writing problems experienced by ESL/EFL students and the strategies that they employed when writing a paragraph in English. The results of the questionnaire were then triangulated with the qualitative data obtained from the three-part questionnaire. Additionally, the written work of these students were analyzed in order identify any writing problems in their written work.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of English major undergraduate students and non-English major undergraduates studying for their B.A. In total, 80 third-year Thai EFL students participated in this research. There were 40 English major undergraduate students and 40 non-English major undergraduate students. These students enrolled in the previously mentioned writing classes in the second semester of the 2015 academic year. According to the university registration system, these two groups of students enrolled in the Paragraph Writing and Writing for Careers courses, offered in the second semester of the 2015 academic year. The participants were selected from the third-year undergraduate students majoring in English and non-English students majoring in Marketing, Communication Arts, and Cultural Resource Management.

Instrumentation

The research instruments used in the present study consisted of the Writing Problems and Strategies Questionnaire and the paragraph writing samples provided by the students.

The Writing Problems and Strategies Questionnaire

The Writing Problems and Strategies Questionnaire is a self-development questionnaire constructed by the researcher and based on existing theoretical frameworks from the review of the literature and previous studies. In other words, the questionnaire was constructed by the researcher, but adapted from the previous works of other scholars (Nguyen, 2009; Baker & Boonkit, 2004). These researchers also investigated the writing problems experienced by university students and the strategies they used to overcome them in the ESL/EFL context. The questionnaire was in English with a Thai translation in order to help students to read and

understand the questionnaire items more clearly so that the data obtained will be more reliable. There are three parts to the questionnaire.

Part One contained the background information on the participants and is concerned with their personal data, such as age, gender, previous grades for writing courses, their years of experience learning English writing or exposure to English writing, as well as general questions about the attitudes of the students toward English writing.

Part Two was used to elicit information about writing problems faced by students during the writing process in a number of aspects: (1) content and ideas, and how to gather ideas; (2) organizational patterns or coherence, cohesion and transitional words, (3) the development of ideas, such as the thesis, the originality of the work, and the supporting details, and (4) language use, such as the use of articles, sentence structures and tenses. This part of the questionnaire consisted of 30 items concerned with writing problems and utilizes a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 to I referring to 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree' respectively. This part of the questionnaire provided open-ended questions in which the respondents independently responded to the questions or describe their own writing problems; such as their inability to write a grammatically correct sentence in English, their inability to coherently express their ideas, their inability to use the most appropriate word choices to express their ideas, or a lack of ideas about the topics that they are assigned to write about.

Part three aimed to obtain data on the frequency of the writing strategies used by the students in the three main stages of the process of paragraph writing: prewriting, drafting/writing, and revising stages. The questionnaire consisted of 36 items, with a scale ranging from 'always' to 'never'.

Paragraph Writing

In order to investigate the writing problems in the writing samples provided by the students, they were instructed to compose a paragraph of at least 150-200 words. These samples were collected from students enrolled in either the Paragraph Writing or English Writing for Careers courses in the second semester of the 2015 academic year. There were 40 English majors and 40 non-English majors enrolling in these two courses. Hence, there were a total of 80 paragraph writing samples collected for the purpose of analysis.

Data Collection Procedures

The data of the research were collected in the following procedures. First, to answer the research hypothesis, the writing problems of students when writing a paragraph in English and the writing strategies employed, the researcher first collected the data at the beginning of the second semester, when the lecturer taught the Paragraph Writing course offered, and the English Writing for Careers course offered by the Language Institute. In this course, the students were taught to write descriptive, narrative, cause and effect, and contrast and comparison paragraphs. This course lasted 16 weeks and consists of 50 minute periods, with a total of 150 minutes for each individual class. In the mid-period of the course, the students were given the assignment of writing 150-200 words on a given topic. The samples submitted by the students were then be collected and copied for analysis. After that, the Writing Problems and Strategies Questionnaire were administered to all of the participants. The date and time for data collection were scheduled in advance and under the supervision of the regular lecturer. Time allocated for students to complete the questionnaire was 30-40 minutes.

Data Analysis

The qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed in accordance in the following procedures.

First, the data from the first part of the questionnaire, demographic information of the English and non-English major students were analyzed as complimentary to the main research questions and discussion of the research. Then it was presented in terms of frequency and percentage.

Second, the data obtained from the Writing Problems and Strategies Questionnaire, particularly in the second part, concerning writing problems, were analyzed using the computer processing program, in order to determine the frequency, percentage, means and standard deviation. The average mean ranges were then interpreted into the mean value level of from the highest to the lowest levels as follows. The highest = 4.21 - 5.00 = high = 3.41 - 4.20, moderate = 2.61 - 3.40, Low = 1 .81 - 2.60, and the lowest = 1.00 – 1.80. Then the findings were tabulated and interpreted.

Third, the second research hypothesis: 'What writing problems are reflected in the paragraph writing sample provided by English major students and non-English major students in terms of the writing processes?' The written works of the students in both groups were also analyzed by three raters using a rubric for rating the composition of a paragraph which includes the main components of effective paragraph writing. The raters then referred to this checklist in order to assess which of the four main categories of writing problems were evident in the writing samples provided by the students. Then the qualitative data from part three of questionnaire on the problems experienced by these students in terms of paragraph writing were analyzed, described and explained. The types of problems were assessed in terms of frequency, ordered from highest to the lowest, and grouped in accordance with the types of problems. This includes (1) content and ideas, as well as how to gather ideas; (2) organizational patterns or coherence, cohesion and transitional words, (3) the development of ideas, such as the originality of the work, the thesis, and the supporting details; (4) vocabulary and word choice, (5) language use, such as the use of articles, sentence structures and tenses; and (6) communicative goals.

Fourth, in order to answer the third research hypothesis, 'What writing strategies were employed by English major students and non-English major students during the writing processes of prewriting, drafting/writing, and revising when writing a paragraph in English?', the data obtained from the third section of the Writing Problems and Strategies Questionnaire were processed by using the processing program, in order to determine the frequency, percentage, means and standard deviation. The mean scores of three main variables, the writing strategies employed in three main stages: prewriting, writing and revising, as well as items for individual writing strategies, were interpreted for the value level using the same interpretation value level of the writing problem mentioned earlier.

Findings

Research Hypothesis 1

There is a significant difference in the writing problems experienced by English major and non- English major Thai EFL university students when writing a paragraph in English.

A comparison of writing problems of English major and non-English major students.

To test research hypothesis 1, the data from part two of the questionnaire using five-point Likert Scale which indicate the statements of writing problems which each item was scored 1 to 5, with a 5 being the strongly agreed and 1 being the strongly disagree towards the statement of writing problems were analyzed for the means and standard deviations and then the independent t-test was used to calculate if there was a statistical significant difference between the mean score of the writing problems of English and non-English major students. Table 1 presents a comparison of writing problems between English major and non-English major students.

Table 1

The Difference in the Mean Scores of Writing Problems between English Major and Non-English Major Students (n=40)

Writing Problems	n	*M*	*SD*	*t*	ρ
English major students	40	2.93	.60	4.19	.00*
non-English major students	40	3.53	.58		

*p< .05

As presented in Table 1, the results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the writing problems experienced by English major and non-English major Thai EFL university students when writing a paragraph in English at the .05 level (*t* = 4.19, *p*< .05).

Analysis of four main types of writing problems experienced* by *English Major and Non-English Major Students.

Furthermore, responses obtained from the writing problem questionnaires were analyzed in four main types of writing problems including (1) content and ideas, and how to gather ideas related to the assigned topic, (2) organizational pattern, unity, coherence, cohesion, and transitional words (3) the developments of ideas: basics, parts of paragraph writing: topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence, and (4) language use, such as sentence structure, vocabulary, or word choice, and grammar points: articles, tenses, subject and

verb agreement, pronouns, and singular and plural nouns. The means and standard deviations were tabulated with the interpretation level value as described below.

Table 2

Overall Mean, Writing Problems of English Major and Non-English Students (n=40)

Writing Problems (5-point Likert Scale Questionnaire)	English Major Students		Non-English Major Student	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
1. Content and Ideas	3.33	.67	3.83	.59
2. Organizational Pattern	2.60	.87	3.54	.70
3. Development of Ideas	3.06	.79	3.61	.76
4. Language Use	2.88	.54	3.67	.67
Overall Writing Problems	2.93	.60	3.53	.58

As shown in Table 2, the overall mean of the writing problems English major students encountered fell into the moderate level (*M* = 2.93, *SD* =.60). They had the problem with the content and ideas the most and it fell into the moderate level ((*M* = 3.33, *SD* =.67), followed by development of ideas (*M* = 3.06, *SD* =.79), and language use (*M* = 2.88, *SD* =.54). These two types of writing problems were at the moderate level. The lowest level of writing problems of English major students was organizational pattern (*M* = 2.60, *SD* =.87); it was at the low level.

For non-English major students, the overall mean of the writing problems fell into the high level (*M* = 3.53, *SD* =.58). They had the problems with the content and ideas the most and it fell into the high level (*M* = 3.83, *SD*=.59), followed by language use (*M*=3.67, *SD*=.67), and development of ideas (*M*=3.61, *SD*=.76). Similar to the English major students, the non-English major students had the writing problems about organizational pattern the least (*M*=3.54, *SD*=.70). However, this writing problem was also at the high level.

Figure 1 also illustrates comparison of the four main types of writing problems English major and non-English major students experienced in writing a paragraph.
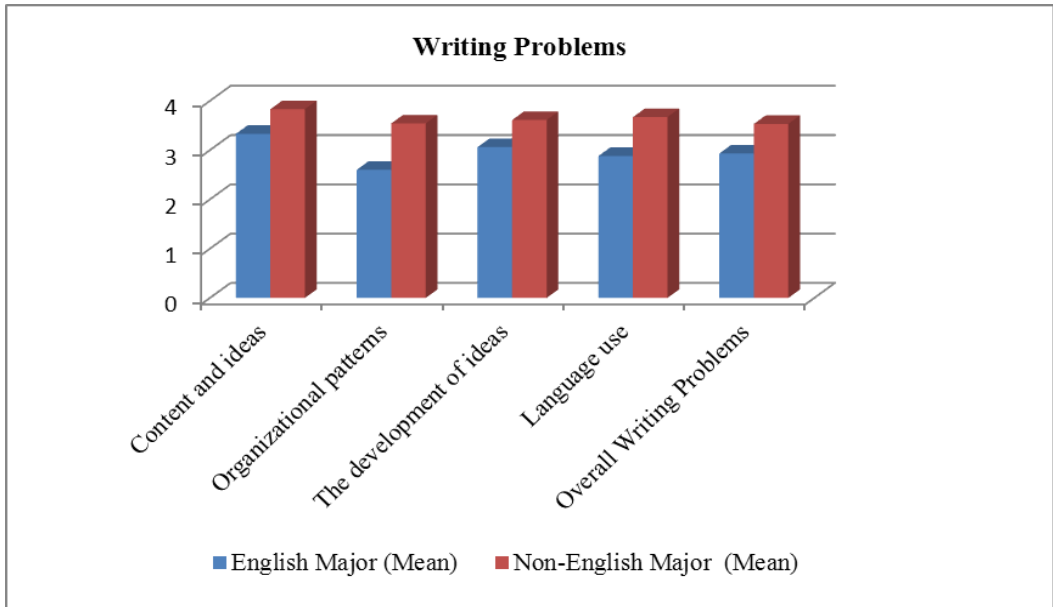

Figure 1. Writing Problems of English Major and Non-English major

In the Figure 1, it appeared that overall non-English major students had more problems than those of English major students. Moreover, non-English major students had more problems in all four main types: content and ideas, organizational patterns, development of ideas, and language use.

Research Hypothesis 2

There is a significant difference in the writing problems reflected in a paragraph written in English by English major and non-English major Thai EFL university students.

The difference of writing problems reflected in paragraphs written by English major and non-English major students.

To test research hypothesis 2, the data, the students' paragraphs were rated by two raters using the writing rubric created by the researcher   The raters looked at the writing problems in students' paragraphs in four aspects: content and ideas, organizational pattern, development of ideas, and language use and gave the scores holistically from 5 (the highest) to 1 (the lowest).

The scores given by two raters were then calculated for the average mean score of 40 paragraphs written by English major students and another 40 paragraphs written by non-English major students. The mean scores of paragraphs from both groups were compared using the independent *t*-test to determine there was any significant difference of overall writing problems. Table 2 presents the difference in the mean scores of writing problems reflected in a paragraph written by both groups.

Table 3

The Difference in the Mean Scores of Writing Problems Reflected in a Paragraph Written in English by English

Major and Non-English Major Thai EFL University Students (n=40)

Writing Problems	n	*M*	*SD*	*t*	ρ
English major students	40	3.725	.862	11.878	.00**
Non-English major students	40	1.813	.798		

**p< .05

As shown in Table 3, the results revealed that there was a significant difference in the writing problems reflected in a paragraph written by English major and non-English major students at the 05 level (*t* = 11.878 *p*< .05). The result accepted the research hypothesis 2. This proved that there was a statistically significant difference in the writing problems reflected in paragraph written by English major and non-English major students.

The difference in four aspects writing problems reflected in paragraphs written by English major and non-English major students.

To find out if there were differences in the four main component of writing problems reflected in the students' paragraphs written by the English major and non-major students, the written works of these students were analyzed in accordance with four main categories of

problems: content and ideas, organizational pattern, development of ideas, and language use. Table 3 presents the number of the students and percentage of writing problems found in the students' paragraph writing of both groups.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage of Writing Problems of English Major Students and Non-English Major Students (*N*=40)
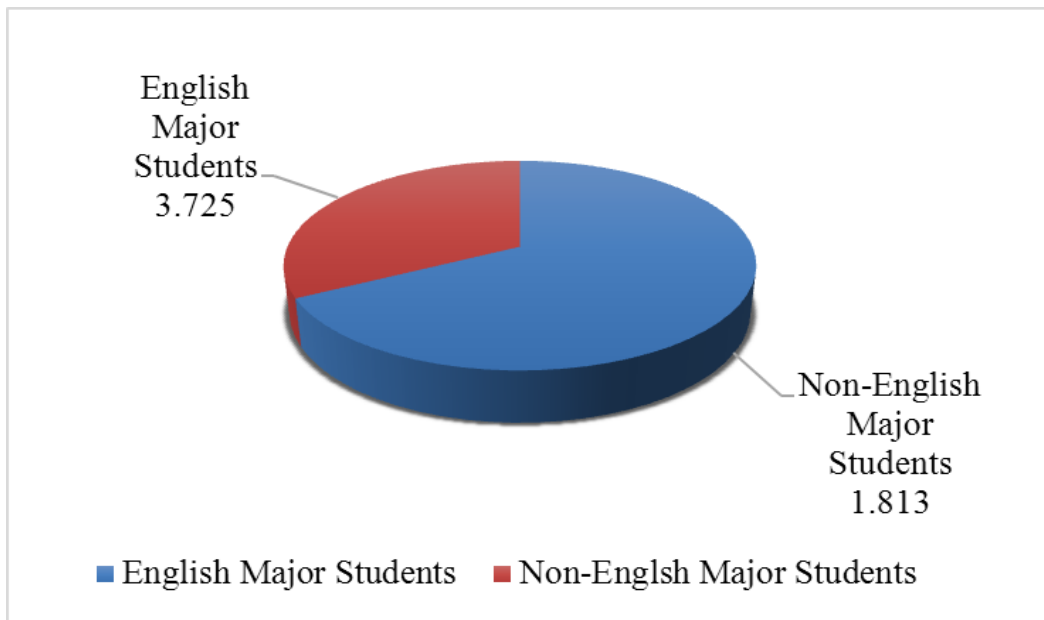
Writing Problems	English Major Students		Non-English Major Student	
	Number frequency	Percentage	Number frequency	Percentage
1. Content and Ideas	9	22.50	10	25.00
2. Organizational Pattern	6	15	9	22.50
3. Development of Ideas	5	12.50	8	20.00
4. Language Use	12	30	12	30
Total	40	100	40	100

As presented in Table 4, the four main components of writing problems were found in the students' paragraph of both groups. However, not all of the students in each group had the same problems. The problem of language use was found within the same number of students and paragraphs. That is, 30% of them (12 paragraphs in each group) had this problem with the highest percentage of all four types of problems. There was a slight difference in the problems of content and ideas. The writing problems about the content and ideas were found in 9 paragraphs (22.50%) written by the English major students' paragraphs whereas these problems were found in 10 paragraphs (25%) written by non-English major students. In addition, it was revealed that the paragraphs written by non-English major students had more problems (22.50%) in organizational pattern than paragraphs written by the English major students (15%). The analysis of paragraph writing for writing problems also showed that development of ideas

appeared to be the least problem of both groups. For paragraphs written by the English major students, 12.50% of the problem in development of ideas was found in their paragraphs, while 20 % this problem was found in paragraphs written by the non-English major students.

Figure 2 illustrates the comparison of writing problems reflected in the paragraphs written by the English major and non-English major students.

Figure 2. A Comparison of the Writing Problems Reflected in the Paragraphs Written by the English major and non-English major students

Figure 2 shows the difference of writing problems reflected in a paragraph written by English major and non-English major students. The first problem, content and ideas, non-English major students have problems more than English major students have.

Research Hypothesis 3

There is a significant difference in the use of writing strategies employed by English major and

non-English major Thai EFL university students during the processes of prewriting, writing, and revising when writing a paragraph in English.

To test research hypothesis 3, the overall means of writing strategies employed by the students in both groups were compared using the independent *t*-test. The result was presented in Table 5

Table 5

Comparison of Writing Strategies of English Major Students and Non-English Major Students (N=40)

Writing Strategies	n	M	SD	t	ρ
English major students	40	3.41	.53	2.39	.02*
non-English major students	40	3.14	.48		

*p < .05

The results of this study show that there is a significant difference in the use of writing strategies employed by English major and non-English major Thai EFL university students during the processes of prewriting, writing, and revising when writing a paragraph in English (*t*=2.39, *p* < .05). In addition, the mean score of writing strategies employed by the English major students (*M* = 3.41, *SD* = .53) was higher than that of the non-English major students (*M* = 3.14, *SD* = .48). The results supported Research Hypothesis 3.

The quantitative data obtained from the writing strategies were also analyzed in accordance with writing strategies used by the students in the three main stages of the writing process of paragraph writing: prewriting, writing, and revising stages.   The results revealed that the English major students used the writing strategies in the higher levels more than those of the non-English major students in all three writing stages of writing processes.   Table 5 presents the mean scores and standard deviation of the three main stages of the writing strategies used by English major and non-English major students.
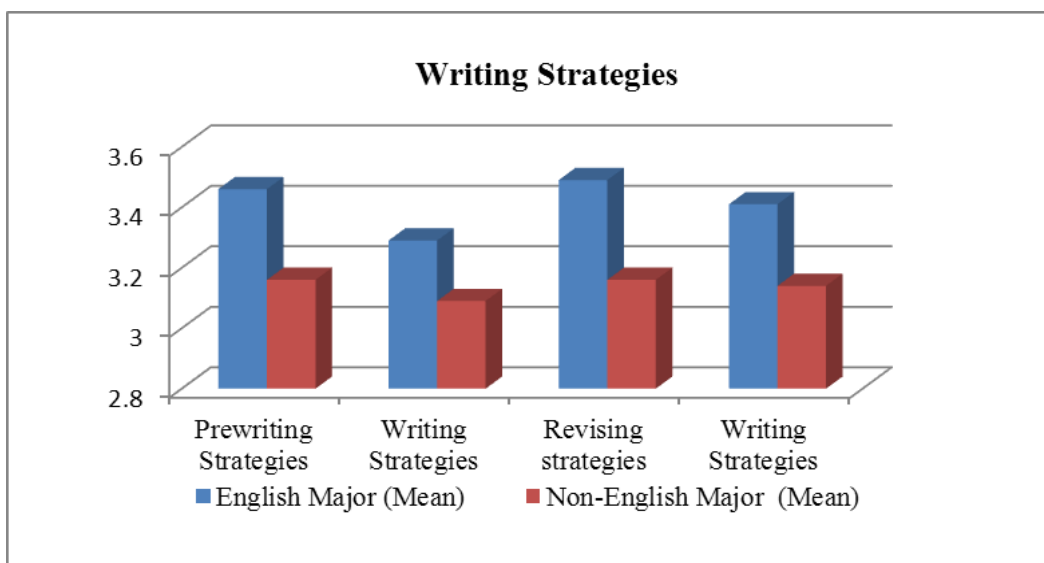
Table 6

Comparison of Three Stages of Writing Strategies between English Major and Non-English Major Students (N=40)

Writing Strategies	English Major Students		Non-English Major Students	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*S.D.*
Prewriting Strategies	3.46	.59	3.16	.53
Writing Strategies	3.29	.52	3.09	.49
Revising Strategies	3.49	.72	3.16	.70
Overall Writing Strategies	3.41	.53	3.14	.48

As shown in Table 6, the English major students used revising strategies or post-writing strategies the most, (*M* = 3.49, *SD* = .72) and at the high level, followed by prewriting strategies, (*M* = 3.46, *SD* = .59) with the high level and writing strategies or while-writing strategies were used at the moderate level *(M* = 3.29, *SD* = .52). For the non-English major students, they used all three writing strategies at the moderate level when revising strategies and prewriting strategies were used the most frequently (*M* = 3.16, *SD* = .70 and *M* = 3.16, *SD* = .53 respectively) and the while-writing strategies were used the least (*M* = 3.09, *SD* = .49).

Figure 3 also illustrates the comparison of the writing strategies employed in the three stages of the writing processes by both English major students and non-English major students.

Figure 3. Writing Strategies Used by English Major and Non-English Major Students

Discussion: Research Hypothesis 1

Both English major and non-English major students encountered the same problems or difficulties when writing in English. Such problems are concerned in four main types: (1) contents and ideas, (2) organizational pattern, (3) the development of ideas, and (4) language use. English major students have less writing problems than non-English major students because English major students have studied more English courses and subjects and have practiced more often than non-English major students have. In addition, non-English major students encountered all four types of writing problems especially problem with the organizational pattern and language use since they had few chances to practice English structure and grammar points in an English classroom. In other words, they lack grammatical knowledge. Also, they had less expose to the use of English in all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The results of writing problems found in this study were similar to the study on writing difficulties conducted by Boonpattanaporn (2007). In her study, the participants were 272 proficient and less proficient English major students. The results reveal the English major students had problems with language use. Verb tense was the most difficult part for students. In their problems about content and ideas, they struck the taking long time to think of ideas and what to write, considering the purposes of writing and writing an outline.

Therefore, in order to solve the writing problems mentioned above, Thai EFL university students should be exposed to English more and practiced more regularly such as having extra activities in and outside a classroom to enhance their English ability or doing online exercises or quizzes and so on because English is globally important for academic context and future career for them nowadays.

Discussion: Research Hypothesis 2

Both English major and non-English major encountered the writing problem; however, the English major students had fewer problems than the non-English major when both groups write a paragraph. The problem about language use was the most difficult problem for both groups. In addition, the non-English major students encountered all four types of writing problem that was (1) content and ideas, (2) organizational pattern, (3) the development of ideas, and (4) the language use.

Discussion: Research Hypothesis 3

Both English major and non-English major students use more writing strategies than non-English major students because English major students have been taught by their English writing instructors for several courses, as well as they have their own strategies such as chatting to their friends who are English native speakers. All these strategies used can help them master their paragraph writing, as well as decrease the amount of errors or difficulties occurred when they write.

Conclusion and Implications

Both English major and non-English major students realize that they have problems in writing in English. They were all experienced some writing problems. The major problems they encountered were with brainstorming the ideas, putting ideas together in coherent way, and errors in the language use such as grammar points and insufficient vocabulary. The non-English major students have more problems that English major students. Both two groups have a problem regarding language use.

Regarding the writing strategies, the English major students use strategies more than non-English major students effectively. The English major students often use their background knowledge or world knowledge to help them writing a paragraph and they make a list of ideas that they can think of in the prewriting stage. In the writing stage or while-writing stage, the English major students were concerned about how to connect contents and ideas smoothly. They had a strong awareness while writing their paragraph. In the revising stage, they went back to edit and changed the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

To improve the level of English writing of Thai EFL university students, it is important for both student and writing instructor to seriously focus on the exact and existing problems so that the training course and curriculum can be customized and matched with the students' problems. In addition, it is suggested that Thai English teachers can play an important role in raising students' consciousness and encouraging their students to make the most effective use of writing strategies to tackle with such difficulties and problems. Consequently, the learning and practicing the use of prewriting, writing and revising strategies appropriately, the level of English writing proficiency of the Thai EFL university students may improve.

Recommendation for Further Studies

Some recommendations for further studies were presented as follows:

1. In order to gain more reliable information, further studies should be conducted to collect students' feedback from more student participants.

2. A qualitative study using interview for both English major and non-English major students should be carried out in order to obtain in-depth data and more reliable information.

3. Further studies should be conducted with larger samples and a larger variety of non-English major students so that the results will be more generalized.

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