


Problems and Causes in Writing Research in Independent Study Course of English Major Students

Sittisak Pongpuehee^{1*}  Prangwadee Phengjan²,
Pattaraporn Deesawat³, Watthanawipha Phutthala⁴

¹ sittisak.pp.bru.ac.th,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7258-8697>

² Prangwadee6740@gmail.com

³ Pattara0412@gmail.com

⁴ January180640@gmail.com



*Corresponding Author : Sittisak Pongpuehee ¹ 

APA Citation:

Pongpuehee, S., Phengjan, P., Deesawat, P., & Phutthala, W. (2020). Problems in writing research and their causes in independent study course of the fourth year English major students at Buriram Rajabhat University. *Journal of English Language and Linguistics*, 1(1), 85-96.

Received Date: April 25, 2020

Accepted Date: June 25, 2020

Abstract

The objectives of this study were 1) to study problems in writing research in Independent Study Course of the English major students, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University (BRU) and 2) to study the causes of the problems. The samples were 70 fourth year English major students, Faculty Humanities and Social Science, BRU, semester 1, academic year 2019, selected by adapting the sample size table (Krejcie& Morgan). The instrument was a questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The results showed that over all the students had problems in writing research in Independent Study course at “moderate” level (\bar{x} = 3.11, S.D.= 0.62). The three most problems were grammatical problems (\bar{x} =3.27,

S.D.=0.52), followed by content problem (\bar{x} =3.18, S.D.=0.62) and sentence structure problems (\bar{x} = 3.12, S.D.=0.66), respectively. The causes of the problems in writing research in Independent Study course of the students were found at “moderate” level (\bar{x} = 3.34, S.D. = 0.78). When considering in aspect, the three most causes of the problems were lack of practice (\bar{x} = 3.48, S.D =0.78) followed by Inadequate time (\bar{x} =3.40, S.D.=0.80) and lack learner’s motivation (\bar{x} =3.32, S.D.=0.70), respectively. In organizing the teaching and learning activities in this course, it should focus on grammar, content and sentence structure, and there should be more exercises provided for students to practice writing. In term of time insufficient, additional appointments may be considered with the students aside from the study time in the period.

Keywords: Cause of the writing problems, Fourth-year students, Independent study, Problems in writing,

Introduction

Writing has been with us for several thousand years, and nowadays is more important than ever. Having spread steadily over the centuries from clay tablets to computer chips, it is poised for further dramatic advances. Although hundreds of millions of people are still unable to read and write, humanity relies on writing to an unprecedented extent (Coulmas, 2002). Writing is the physical manifestation of a spoken language. It is thought that human beings developed language c. 35,000 BCE as evidenced by cave paintings from the period of the Cro-Magnon Man (c. 50,000-30,000 BCE) which appear to express concepts concerning daily life (Mark, 2011). Writing, form of human communication by means of a set of visible marks that are related, by convention, to some particular structural level of language (Olson, 2019). Writing is a method of representing language in visual or tactile form. Writing systems use sets of symbols to represent the sounds of speech and may also have symbols for such things as punctuation and numerals (Ager, 2019). Writing is intimidating. There’s this expectation of artful precision, mercurial grammatical rules, and the weird angst that comes with writing for other people. You start with a tidy nugget of an idea,

but as you try to string it into language, it feels more like you're pulling out your own intestines (Kerrigan, 2014).

Independent Study gives a student a chance to delve deeper into an academic pursuit that is not available in any of the current courses offered by the University (Ramirez, 2014). An Independent Study is a class taken by a student that has much less supervision and direction than a typical class (Sarikas, 2018). Independent Study is a course taught independently to one student. Not all courses in the catalog are approved for Independent Study (Jasmine, 2019). Independent Study is a different way of learning. In independent study, a student is guided by a teacher but usually does not take classes with other students every day. The student works independently (Yvonne Evans, 2018). An Independent Study is a course of study that a student pursues well, independently. Students plan a course of study in cooperation with a willing advisor who also sticks around to make sure that the student stays on track and completes assignments and tests (Fleming, 2019).

Literally, I.S. takes the place of one of your four classes each semester of senior year. With the one-on-one support and guidance of a faculty mentor, you will plan, develop, and complete a significant piece of original research, scholarship, or creative expression – culminating in a major research paper, an art exhibit or a performance – that pulls together what you've learned and demonstrates the analytical, creative, and communication skills you have honed (Chandor, 1994).

Byrne (1988, p. 4) thinks that because of the absence of the prosodic features in writing, the writer has to compensate these features by keeping the channel of communication open through his/her own efforts by selecting appropriate structures and by using appropriate connecting devices so that the text can be interpreted on its own. Similarly, Hedge (1988, p.5) thinks that so as the writer to compensate the absence of the prosodic features in writing, he/she has to write with high degree of organization, careful choice of vocabulary and using complex grammatical devices. Grammatical problems, mechanical problems, sentence structure problems and problems

of diction are linguistic problems that hamper students' effective writing in English.

Students' problems in writing may occur from cognitive aspects (Raimes, 1983) thinks that "when students complain about how difficult it is to write in a second language, they are talking not only about the difficulty of finding the right words and using the correct grammar. In addition, there is no complete guide for making Independent Study of English language of students that is a complete book. We therefore want to study this matter. To know what students have problems and what is the cause of that problem.

For this reason, the researchers therefore see the importance of English writing problems of Thai students. Especially Problems and Their causes in Writing Independent Study course by fourth Year English Major students at Buriram Rajabhat University that all students must meet various problems in research therefore is the reason for doing this research.

Literature Review

Byrne (1988) divided the problems that make writing problems into three categories. The first is a Linguistic Difficulty. Linguistics aspect like grammar, vocabulary, language use and choice of the sentence in writing must have fully monitored. The second is Physiology Difficulty, which more focuses on the writer's difficult because there aren't direct interaction and feedback from the reader when they are writing. This difficulty more focuses on the difficulty in developing written material or content of the composition. The third is a cognitive difficulty. Writing has to be thought through formal instruction like spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing.

Regarding learners' writing problems, Byrne (1988, p.4) thinks that because of the absence of the prosodic features in writing, the writer has to compensate these features by keeping the channel of communication open through his/her own efforts by selecting appropriate structures and by using appropriate connecting devices so that the text can be interpreted on its own.

So, as the writer to compensate the absence of the prosodic features in writing, he/ she has to write with high degree of organization, careful choice of vocabulary and using complex grammatical devices. Grammatical problems, mechanical problems, sentence structure problems and problems of diction are linguistic problems that hamper students' effective writing in English.

Research Objectives

1. To study problems in writing research in Independent Study course of the fourth-year English major students Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University.
2. To study the causes of problems in writing research in Independent Study course of the fourth-year English major students Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This research was a quantitative research. It described the problems in writing research in independent study course written by the students and the causes of the problems. It employed the quantitative approaches to analyze the data and tried to investigate the degree of the writing problems and their causes.

2. Population and Samples

The samples of this study are 70 fourth year English major students who enroll on the Independent Study course (1554901) in the first semester of the academic year 2019 at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University. They are selected by Krejci and Morgan's sample size table.

3. *Instrument and Procedures*

The instruments used for this study were as follows:

The research instrument was questionnaire. The constructions of the instruments will be as follows:

1. The researchers review the studies related to the present study, the problems in writing and the causes of the problems.
2. The researchers consult the adviser how to construct the questionnaire to be an instrument of the study.
3. The researchers construct the questionnaire of the study. It consists of 4 parts as follows:

Part 1 - General information data is about basic data of the important information including gender, age, class, grade point average of Essay Writing and grade point average.

Part 2 - Questions about Problem in writing research in Independent Study Course. The researchers draft the questionnaire using the rating scale from Likert's 5 levels determined by scoring in each question.

5	means	most
4	means	much
3	means	moderate
2	means	less
1	means	least

Part 3 – Questions about Causes of Problems in writing research in Independent Study Course. The researchers draft the questionnaire using the rating scale from Likert's 5 levels determined by scoring in each question.

5	means	most
4	means	much
3	means	moderate
2	means	less
1	means	least

Part 4 – Suggestions and Opinions. The respondents will write the suggestions about problems in writing research and causes of Problems in writing in Independent Study Course.

4. The researchers submitted the draft questionnaire 43 items both in Thai and English to the advisor to check for the correctness and appropriateness and revise according to the advisor's suggestions.

5. The revised questionnaire was examined by the three experts to check for the IOC. The IOC was 0.95.

6. The questionnaire was edited according to the experts' suggestions.

4. Data Collection

The data of the research were collected in the following:

1. The researchers studied theory, documents, and related research with the problems in writing for Independent Study courses.

2. The researchers studies questionnaire related of problems in writing research and causes of Problems in Independent Study course.

3. The researchers drafted questionnaire needs of English usage of problems in writing research and causes of problems in Independent Study course, rating scale from Likert, 5 levels

4. The researchers brought the questions to collect data with the fourth-year English major students. The researchers collected data after answering all questionnaire.

5. When the data collection is complete, take the questionnaire to check the completion of the answer. Collect to continue analyzing the data.

5. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed and deduced by using the data analysis methods as follows:

After checking the completion of each questionnaire, the researchers analyzed the data collected from questionnaires by using a computer program (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. There are three statistical devices employed in this study as follows:

1. The general information of the samples will be calculated by frequency and percentage
2. The data about the problems in writing and the causes of problems obtained from the questionnaire will be calculated by mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.). The following criteria will be employed for interpretation.
3. The data obtained from the questionnaire will be analyzed by using percentage, mean and standard deviation. After that, the researchers compared the average scores of needs with the criteria as follows: (Criteria Likert's Scale)

Mean Range	Degree of Problem
4.50 - 5.00	means most
3.50 – 4.49	means much
2.50 – 3.49	means moderate
1.50 – 2.49	means less
1.00 – 1.49	means least

Statistics used in this study were mean, percentage and standard deviation.

Results

1. Problems in Writing Independent Study

The problems in writing independent study consist of five problems: grammatical problems, content problem, sentence structure problems, word choice problems, organization problem. Each problem will be presented as follows in table 1.

Table 1

Problems in Writing Independent Study of Fourth Year, English Major Students, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University

Problems in writing independent study	M	S.D.	Meaning
1. Grammatical problem	3.27	0.52	moderate
2. Content problem	3.18	0.62	moderate
3. Sentence structure problems	3.12	0.66	moderate
4. Word choice problems	3.05	0.57	moderate
5. Organization problem	2.97	0.75	less
Total	3.11	0.62	moderate

From the Table 4.2, the findings showed on the totally that the most frequently students had the problems in writing, of this research were at “moderate” level ($\bar{x} = 3.11$, $S.D = 0.62$). When considering each item, the results showed that students have problem most was grammatical problems ($\bar{x} = 3.27$, $S.D = 0.52$), followed by content problems ($\bar{x} = 3.18$, $S.D = 0.62$), and problems of sentence structure ($\bar{x} = 3.12$, $S.D = 0.66$), respectively.

2. Causes of Problems in Writing Independent Study

Table 2

Causes of Problems in Writing Independent Study of Fourth Year, English Major Students, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University

Cause of Writing Problems	\bar{x}	S.D.	Meaning
1. Lack of Practice	3.48	0.78	moderate
2. Inadequate Time	3.40	0.80	moderate
3. Lack Learners' Motivation	3.32	0.70	moderate
4. Teacher's Feedback	3.18	0.87	moderate
Total	3.34	0.78	moderate

From the Table 2, the findings showed on the totally that the most frequently students had in the problems in writing, of this research were at “moderate” level (\bar{x} =3.34, S.D =0.78). When considering each item, the results showed that the most causes of problems most was lack of practice (\bar{x} =3.48, S.D =0.78), followed by Inadequate time (\bar{x} =3.40, S.D =0.80), and Lack Learner’s Motivation (\bar{x} =3.32 , S.D =0.70), respectively.

Discussion

The research results revealed that over all the students had problems in writing research in independent study course, of this research were at “moderate”: 1) grammatical problems 2) content problems and 3) sentence structure problems. It was found that grammatical problems occurred most frequently. It means that the students had problems in the use of grammatical rules when writing a research, especially they can understand the principles of grammar, but cannot write research correctly and accurately. This could be explained that their proficiency to apply grammatical rules to write a research is still insufficient. It is possible that they have lack grammar knowledge. These events occurrences of the same problems committed by the same students. This is supported by Bani & Albalawi (2015) who revealed that reasons behind students ‘writing weaknesses from their perspectives.

The research results revealed that over all the students had causes of problems in writing research in Independent Study course, of this research were at “moderate”: 1) lack of practice 2) inadequate time and 3) lack learner’s motivation. It was found that lack of practice occurred most frequently. It means that the students had causes of problems in lack of practice especially they lack training that reflects them unable to write fluently. This could be explained that their proficiency to apply writing skill to write a research is still insufficient. It is possible that they have lack time or knowledge to practice their skill. Grabe and Kaplan (1966) think that since writing does not come naturally but rather gained through con tenuous effort and much practice, it becomes a complex skill.

Recommendations

1. *Implications*

1.1 The research results can be applied to the students of the studies to learn Essay Writing to help push and promote the learning of the student to be more effective.

1.2 The results of the study can be used as the guideline to provide the students practice and lessons of Essay Writing to enhance their skills of Essay Writing to a high level.

1.3 This results of the study were useful to teacher and students to improve skill of Independent Study and other courses relating to writing skill.

2. *Further Studies*

2.1 The future studies should be conduct interviewing about the problems they make should be included in the future research to find out more causes why the students make those problems.

2.2 The future studies to compare research should be about problems for writing on Essay writing of other groups of English Major Students, Buriram Rajabhat University.

References

- Bani, Y & Albalawi. (2015). *The most common types of writing problems among English language and translation major sophomore female students at Tabuk University*. Retrieved from <http://www.multidisciplinaryjournals.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/FULL-PAPER-EXPLORING-THE-MOST-COMMON-TYPES-OF-WRITING-PROBLEMS.pdf>.
- Byrne, H. (1988). *University students' English writing problems: Diagnosis and remedy*. Retrieved from <http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/University-Students----English-Writing-Problems-Diagnosis-and-Remedy.pdf>

- Christine, S. (2018). *How to take an independent study class in high school*. Retrieved from <https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-to-take-an-independent-study-class-in-high-school>
- David, R. (2019). *Writing: Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/writing>
- Florian, C. (2002). *Writing systems: An introduction to their linguistic analysis*. Retrieved from http://assets.cambridge.org/052178/2171/excerpt/0521782171_excerpt.pdf
- Grace, F. (2019). *Independent study*. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-independent-study-1857517>.
- Jasmine, Q. (2019). *Academic policies, independent study - national university*. Retrieved from <https://www.nu.edu/student-services/academic-policies-and/independent-study/>
- J.C. Chandor. (1994). *Independent study: The College of Wooster*. Retrieved from <https://www.wooster.edu/academics/research/is/>
- Mark, J. (2011). *Writing: Ancient history encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/writing/>.
- Raimes. (1983). *Investigating EFL students' writing difficulties and common errors in writing*. Retrieved from <http://univbejaia.dz/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/5858/Investigating%20EFL%20students%27%20writing%20difficulties%20and%20common%20errors%20in%20writing.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Sally, K. (2014). *Writing is thinking*. Retrieved June 19, 2019, from <https://alistapart.com/article/writing-is-thinking/>.
- Yvonne, E. (2018). *Independent study - educational options (CA Dept of Education)*. Retrieved June 19, 2019, from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is/>