CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.0   Introduction

This chapter provides the conclusion for the research findings. The important findings and the summary of the findings are discussed. The pedagogical implications of the findings are also provided together with recommendations for improvement. Suggestions for vocabulary instruction and practical implementation are provided. At the end of this chapter, suggestions for further research are also concluded.

5.1   Findings

5.1.1 Important Findings

The study of lexical errors in the English compositions of Thai EFL students has yielded overall findings as stated below:

1. Intralingual errors outnumber interlingual errors (77.6%), but the highest frequency (20.4%) of lexical errors falls into a direct translation error type, subtype of interlingual errors.

2. Intralingual errors have more subcategories. As a result, it shows a greater number of errors made under this category.

3. Intralingual interference or the difficulty of the TL is not the major cause of the errors. In contrast, the MT interference is the main cause of errors for Thai EFL students.

4. There is no record of the use of native words error type. Thai EFL students are not affected by this type of error when they write in English.

5. *Omissions* account for second place (19.5%) after direct translations, while *distortions, redundancy, and collocational errors* record the same frequency of occurrence (5.0%) among intralingual errors.

6. The lowest frequency of errors (0.9%) is confusion of binary terms.

5.1.2 Summary of the Findings

The results of this study show that intralingual error outnumbers interlingual errors. From the total of lexical errors, 77.6 % were intralingual errors while only about 22.4 % were attributed to mother tongue interference. But the highest type of lexical errors found in this study did not appear in intralingual errors. Instead, the literal translation which is in interlingual error type was the lexical error most done, while the use of native word error type had no record in this study. It means that although the complexity and difficulty in the target language has great influence on students' English composition, the mother tongue interference is the main cause of errors for Thai EFL students. This finding is slightly different from other studies, such as Ong (2007); Woon (2003); Zahira (2003); and Tan (1994) who conducted the researches in ESL context. According to the results of these studies, the main cause of lexical errors was intralingual error. However, the finding of this study supports the study carried by Cha (1996) who conducted a research on a study of lexical errors among Korean EFL students. She found that the highest number of lexical errors in her study were the literal translation error type. This can be implied that while the difficulty within the TL is the main cause of lexical errors for many ESL students, mother tongue interference plays a big role in an EFL setting like Thailand and Korea. EFL students face difficulties of negative transfer from their native language rather than

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difficulties within the TL. Thus, the main cause of errors for Thai EFL students is negative transfer or interference from the native language.

Of the 10 intralingual errors shown in the previous chapter, the omission error type had the highest frequency of occurrence (19.5%) and the addition error type came second (13.8%). Distortions, redundancy, and collocational errors had the same frequency of occurrences (5.0%) among the error types of this category. Confusion of binary terms had the lowest frequency of occurrence (0.9%). All the intralingual errors represented in this study are mostly due to incorrect application or incomplete learning or students are simply ignorant about the rules and regulations of the TL. However, the differences in language structure between the learners' native language and the TL were also a cause of errors for Thai EFL students, for instance, the omission of the copula. In Thai a subject can be immediately followed by an adjective, and it is unnecessary to put the copula before an adjective as in English. When producing a sentence in English, the Thai subjects employed the Thai sentence structure in English, thus producing an error. Another example is the different structure of the compound nouns between Thai and English, e.g. the word *'software program'* in English has a different word order in Thai, which is *'program software'*. It is interesting to note that, when the learner faces difficulties, there is normally interference of the mother tongue. Many lexical errors which appear to be intralingual errors, such as collocational errors, omissions, confusion of derivatives, and confusion of binary terms can also be interpreted as mother tongue interference.

According to results, it is surprising that direct translation is the most frequent in this study (20.4%). It can be concluded that interference of the mother tongue or negative transfer from L1 to L2 is the main and serious cause of errors. This seems to be

the bigger difficulty for the learners in the EFL context like the subjects of this study. In this study there is no trace of the use of native words because of the great difference between the MT (Thai) and the TL (English), especially, in terms of graphology and phonology. Thai writing is very different from English. Thus, the tendency for Thai EFL students to code switch from Thai to English is very rare.

5.2 Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study revealed that Thai EFL students have great difficulties acquiring English vocabulary. It can be suggested that Thai EFL students, particularly the fourth year English major students of the Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus, need to receive more vocabulary instruction. As mention before, the teaching of vocabulary and studies on vocabulary learning have been neglected. In general, Thai EFL students, and especially the subjects in this study, do not pay much attention to vocabulary when writing an English essay. The majority of them focuses on grammar. Vocabulary is not the most difficult aspect of the language in the writing of English essays as revealed in the questionnaire of this study.

It is hoped that, the results of this study will be helpful for both teachers and learners. The teachers can use the results of this study as a guideline to improve their instruction. Moreover, teachers can place equal emphasis on the teaching of vocabulary and the teaching of grammar. The causes of lexical errors which were revealed in this study will help teachers understand their students' difficulties and assist them in the planning and designing of materials for vocabulary teaching. As for the learners, the results of this study are useful in their English language learning in general and in the writing English essays in particular. Grammar is not the only aspect which is the most difficult and which needs

attention. Vocabulary also plays a crucial role in English language learning. Insufficient knowledge of vocabulary can be the cause of errors in the writing of English essays. In addition, the causes of lexical errors in this study can help the learners have a better understanding of why they produce such errors. They can learn from their errors and give more importance to the correct use of vocabulary in essay writing.

In order to facilitate Thai EFL students' learning English, especially English vocabulary, some recommendations are suggested in the following section:

5.2.1 Foreign Language Policy in Thailand

In accordance with EFL policy in the Thai educational system nowadays, English is a compulsory subject taught in all primary schools with the goal of developing students' proficiency to fulfill a number of purposes such as communication, acquisition of knowledge, use of English at tertiary level or even career advancement. Secondly, the government provides 12 years of basic education to the teaching and learning of English from Grade 1 to Grade 9. English is optional from Grade 10 to Grade 12 (Wongsothorn 2000 in Foley 2005). Thirdly, in the latest strategy paper, the Ministry of Education supports a bill to establish an accelerated English program in the schools, in which students spend up to 15 hours per week studying various subjects in English (Nimkannon, 2006). In fact, this seems to be the ideal situation especially, for the period of time allotted to the study of English per week. At present, in the government educational system, students spend not more than 4 hours per week studying English. In the primary schools, from Grade 1 to Grade 3, students are given only 2 hours per week to learn English while students from Grade 4 to Grade 6 have 3 hours per week. Besides, it is surprising that the numbers of contact hours in the high schools and at the tertiary level is the same, that is, 4

hours per week. This indicates that even though the government tries to place English at the forefront of national development with a well-structured educational policy, in practice, the Thai EFL students at all levels do not have enough exposure to English, and as a result, their proficiency is low.

To help Thai EFL students to have more exposure to the TL at all levels, the government, especially the Ministry of Education needs to extend the time for the studying of English as proposed in the strategy paper. This can help alleviate the formidable burden of Thai EFL students' language learning because sufficient exposure is one factor that can improve students' English knowledge and their proficiency. Moreover, with greater exposure to English, the Ministry is also able to achieve the goal of improving students' language proficiency as stated at the beginning of this section.

5.2.2 English Teaching Methodology

As mentioned earlier, at the tertiary level, the approach to language teaching has been changed from traditional and conservative to functional –communicative with eclectic orientation. At the same time, learner-centered culture and performance-based assessment are also emphasized. However, many western and local educationists have been criticized because Thai educational institutions, at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels are still using the traditional and conservative approach to the teaching of EFL in some aspects, especially in the teaching of grammar and vocabulary. It can be seen that the teachers and learners' attitudes toward English language learning still rely heavily on the traditional approach where teachers give instructions and students receive them passively. Teacher-centered teaching methods like this can still be seen in English language classrooms in Thailand. In addition, the functional-communicative approach and other

eclectic methods are not very effective because learners pay more attention to grammar and put less emphasis on other aspects such as reading, listening, and the learning of vocabulary.

To resolve such problems, the present attitude toward English teaching and learning of Thai EFL teachers and learners should be changed radically. For example, teachers need to apply the functional-communicative approach and other eclectic methods in the classroom and place more emphasis on learner-centred and performance-based assessment together with a balanced teaching of the four language skills. For students, the attitude of giving more importance to grammar should be radically changed by giving more emphasis to other aspects such as vocabulary, reading, listening, and speaking which are applicable to functional and communicative strategies.

Many of the lexical errors produced in this study are caused by the use of equivalent vocabulary in the students' mother tongue. In other words, an equivalent in the mother tongue seems to be an obstacle in the learning vocabulary for Thai EFL students. The results of the questionnaire provide evidence that support this finding. The majority of the subjects prefer to use a bilingual dictionary when they cannot think of or recall a new word. In addition, regarding the writing of an English essay, the questionnaire of this study showed that most of the subjects first think of a word or sentence in Thai and then translate that into English. Consequently, they cannot actually use English vocabulary properly in varied contexts. For example, they cannot differentiate the prepositions *during/between* since the Thai equivalents are synonymous. In English, however, these two words are different in meaning and need to be used in different contexts. Hence, teachers have to encourage their students to use a monolingual dictionary in order to avoid resorting to Thai equivalents and literal translation from Thai to English. A monolingual English-English

dictionary provides more details than a bilingual English-Thai dictionary (e.g. fundamental knowledge about words, roots, pronunciation, derivation, infection, and word formation).

5.2.3 Learning Vocabulary in Context

The quality of the vocabulary used by the subjects in the compositions and the lexical errors produced are fundamentally a result of vocabulary acquisition. Knowing just a list of words is not enough to write English compositions. Students need to know how to use vocabulary according to the context as well. In context, the meaning of a word is defined through its relationship to other words, so it is easier to learn and remember rather than learning the word in isolation. More than that, meeting a word in different contexts also helps the students expand and improve the quality of the vocabulary they have learned (Schmitt, 2000). Thus, teachers should help the students by increasing their chances to learn vocabulary through exposure to words in contexts, and not only concentrate on introducing new words with their meaning in isolation. Teachers should assign the students activities outside the classroom such as reading English newspapers or magazines, watching English programs or listening to the radio. Through these activities, the students can learn a word in different contexts, and can better use and understand vocabulary. This is very important because the questionnaire of this study revealed that the subjects lack exposure to reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills outside the classroom. To resolve this problem, teachers must find ways of improving their students' vocabulary by encouraging additional activities in and outside the classroom because additional exposure will help to consolidate the words in the memory and enable the students to use words more effectively in context.

5.2.4 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

It is important for students to be taught a vocabulary learning strategies by their teachers because this can facilitate their vocabulary learning more effectively. Teachers should encourage their students to be aware of their own vocabulary learning strategies by designing appropriate exercises to promote the use of vocabulary learning strategies. In the classroom, teachers should teach the students how to use strategies such as analyzing parts of speech, analyzing affixes and roots, guessing the meaning from the textual context, connecting a word to a previous personal experience, and so on. In addition, teachers should also observe vocabulary learning strategies used by students and also try to provide more efficient strategies for them to increase their vocabulary knowledge and to learn more successfully the meaning and usage of words. Many studies in Thailand have revealed that Thai EFL students do not use many vocabulary learning strategies in acquiring English vocabulary. As a result, the usage remains at a low level (Dhanarattgannon, 1990; Waemusa, 1993; Krajangsirisin, 2001). Thus, Thai EFL teachers play a crucial role in the teaching of vocabulary. A variety of techniques for vocabulary learning strategies must be taught to the students in the classroom.

5.2.5 Error Correction

Error correction is one of the most important stages in second language learning. As stated earlier, L2 lexical errors in English need to be distinguished and corrected by the teachers in order to prevent the errors being repeated. Thus, in the classroom, teachers should correct their students, especially the errors that the students correct by themselves, for example, the direct translation errors produced due to mother tongue interference. According to the results of this study, most of the time, the learners tend to use Thai sentence structures or translate words from Thai into English. They are

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familiar with Thai structures and are not aware that it is wrong to use them in English. For example, most of the subjects in this study cannot differentiate between the words *'importance'* and *'important'* because in Thai, noun is normally used. If the teachers do not correct the error, the learners will not see these forms as errors and will always effect them. If the teachers involve the students in the correction of errors, the students will learn to avoid such errors. Teachers need to involve their students in error correction in their teaching. Therefore, correcting the errors in the classroom while the learners are still engaged in writing and everything is still fresh in their mind is an effective method that teachers can apply.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This study was an error analysis of lexical errors in the English compositions of fourth-year English major students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus. To shed more light on the students' lexical errors, further research should be conducted based on the following recommendations:

1. Lexical errors that are found frequently such as direct translations, omissions, additions and confusion of sense relations should be explored in future research because these errors are found at all levels of proficiency. If the causes of these errors are better understood and dealt with, the quality of the students' writing, particularly, in the use of vocabulary, will be improved.

2. In order to obtain different outcomes, other dependent data such as speech-based data should be included in future research because this research focused only on written data.

3. Interviewing students about the errors they make is a good way to find out why the students make those errors.

4. The lexical errors that Thai EFL students produce should be analyzed in order to determine whether they could be considered as acceptable creative local adaptations of English, that is, Thai English used by fluent Thai speakers of English in the Thai EFL community.

5. A comparison of the research on lexical errors conducted in error analysis in the universities of Thailand should be made in order to ascertain the students' level of English proficiency in general and the use of vocabulary in particular. Subsequently, methods to improve vocabulary teaching can be introduced to help students develop their proficiency in vocabulary usage.

5.4 Summary

The researcher hopes that the outcomes and findings of this study will be useful for both teachers and learners. Some pedagogical recommendations in this chapter can be used by teachers to help their students overcome their difficulty in the learning of English vocabulary. It is also hoped that the learners will understand the causes of their lexical errors and pay more attention to the use of vocabulary in their writing.