

Thai EFL University Students’ Writing in the Digital Age:
Error Analysis Revisited

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| Article information | |
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| Abstract | Writing is often considered the most difficult language skill for EFL learners due to its persistent grammatical and lexical challenges. Although tools such as Google Translate and ChatGPT are increasingly used, concerns persist regarding overreliance and reduced learner autonomy. This study investigated the grammatical errors and writing strategies among Thai EFL university students, with particular attention to the impact of digital tools. Data were collected from 70 undergraduates through in-class writing and a questionnaire on writing attitudes, strategies, and resources. Errors were analyzed using a five-stage error analysis framework. The results revealed that mechanical errors, especially punctuation and capitalization, were most frequent, followed by word- and sentence-level errors. These were attributed to both interlingual and intralingual interference. Further, the survey findings showed that while the students moderately enjoyed writing, they recognized its value beyond exams. Digital tools were widely used and viewed as helpful for improving structure and coherence, yet the study highlighted the need for teacher guidance in order to ensure responsible use. The findings have suggested that effective writing instruction should combine explicit grammar teaching, written corrective feedback, and the guided use of generative AI tools in order to improve writing accuracy and to foster learner independence. |

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Writing is often the most difficult skill for second language learners, especially due to its grammar and vocabulary challenges (Aslan, 2024; Kampookaew, 2020; Prapobratanakul, 2024). Thai EFL students also struggle with sentence construction and independent language use (Wongkittiporn, 2024), highlighting the need for effective instructional support. In EFL contexts, writing serves not only as a skill to master but also as a critical tool for assessing learners' English proficiency. Tasks such as free writing on controlled topics offer valuable insights into learners' natural L2 usage and areas needing improvement (Phoocharoensil, 2009). While numerous studies have analyzed grammatical errors and their causes in order to propose strategies for improvement (e.g., Phoocharoensil et al., 2016; Roongsitthichai et al., 2019; Sermsook et al., 2017), writing challenges remain persistent, particularly for Thai EFL university students.

This study aimed to shed light on the grammatical errors found in the writing of Thai EFL university students, as well as their attitudes, approaches, and perceived challenges related to English writing. It also investigated the writing strategies and resources that students commonly relied on—such as textbooks, peer support, translation tools, and generative AI platforms. By doing so, the study sought to present a clearer picture of English writing among Thai EFL university students in the digital era, where technology increasingly shapes language use and learning behavior.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT have been shown to reduce student anxiety, promote critical thinking, and provide detailed feedback (Rahimi et al., 2024; Yang, 2024; Yang & Zhang, 2024). Similarly, Grammarly not only corrects common grammatical and stylistic errors but also improves writing accuracy among college students (Barrot, 2021; Yang, 2024). Nevertheless, concerns remain regarding their role in promoting learner autonomy and whether students are genuinely developing essential writing skills through their use, as these tools may not be equally beneficial for learners at all proficiency levels. For example, Shiyao (2021) found that while intermediate learners improved with automated written corrective feedback (AWCF), low-proficiency students showed little progress due to limited grammatical knowledge.

In today's digital era, students have access to a wide range of language learning applications and programs, allowing them to use technology as a tool to support and develop their English language skills (Pitukwong & Saraiwang, 2024). As these tools become more prevalent in English language learning environments, it is important to examine their impact on learners' writing outcomes, particularly with regard to grammatical accuracy. While numerous studies have analyzed grammatical errors among Thai EFL learners, many have done so through the lens of second language acquisition (SLA) frameworks, with limited attention to learners' increasing reliance on digital tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Google Translate. The connection between learners' error patterns and their use of generative AI tools remains largely underexplored, particularly in the context of Thai EFL university students.

In order to address this gap, this study examined the grammatical errors in Thai EFL university students' writing, focusing on sentences as key units. It also explored students' attitudes, challenges, and commonly used writing resources through a survey. The findings aimed to assist with the acquisition of more

effective teaching materials and methods in order to enhance Thai EFL learners' writing proficiency.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study sought to 1) investigate the grammatical errors made by Thai EFL students in their English writing, focusing on sentences as fundamental units of written communication, and to 2) explore the writing strategies, challenges, and resources that students relied on during the writing process—particularly in light of their exposure to digital tools—through a learner survey. The findings aimed to raise awareness of the need for developing more effective instructional materials, teaching methodologies, and lesson plans that are responsive to both emerging learning technologies and the specific needs of Thai EFL learners. Ultimately, the study sought to support the enhancement of learners' grammatical accuracy and overall writing proficiency.

2. Literature Review

Error analysis (EA) is a linguistic approach that examines learner errors in order to uncover patterns and influences, offering valuable insights for teaching and learning (Cook, 2008; Gass et al., 2013). Corder (1967) argues that errors should not merely be corrected but analyzed in order to understand how learners acquire and use language, providing more effective teaching strategies. This is consistent with one of the arguments in second language acquisition—that errors and mistakes made by second language learners are resources from which to understand the L2 acquisition process involved. Practically speaking, errors and mistakes are to be construed as research opportunities rather than drawbacks to be avoided at all costs (Ellis, 1997). Studies on Thai EFL learners have identified common errors, including grammatical issues, word order problems, L1 transfer errors, and collocational mistakes, which can lead to communication ambiguities (Kampookaew, 2020; Sermsook et al., 2017; Yumanee & Phoocharoensil, 2013). For example, a student's sentence, "This is he book," reflects a misunderstanding of possessive forms, where "his" should have been used. Ellis (1997) and James

(2013) further highlight that analyzing errors reveals learner progress, supports hypothesis testing, and aids with self-correction, making it a critical tool in language education.

2.1 Error Analysis Framework

Error analysis provides a systematic approach to examining learner errors in order to uncover patterns and inform targeted instruction. While early frameworks, such as Corder's (1971) three-stage model, emphasized recognizing, describing, and explaining errors, subsequent developments have expanded on this foundation. Gass et al. (2013), for instance, proposed a six-stage process consisting of data collection, error identification, classification, quantification, source analysis, and remediation. Building on these models, Phoocharoensil et al. (2016) introduced a five-stage framework—data collection, error identification, description, explanation, and evaluation—which has been widely applied in EFL contexts due to its practical relevance. This study adopts Phoocharoensil et al.'s (2016) model as a guiding framework for analyzing learner errors in writing, as it offers a clear and applicable structure for classroom-based research. The following sections outline each stage as implemented in the present study.

2.1.1 Collection of Learner Language Samples

The study collected written samples in order to systematically identify and analyze errors, aligning with the cross-sectional methods commonly used in error analysis. Written data from in-class assignments were used to capture authentic learner output and to highlight frequent errors.

2.1.2 Error Identification

Errors, defined as consistent deviations from target-like forms due to gaps in knowledge, were distinguished from performance mistakes that learners could self-correct (Ellis, 1997; Gass et al., 2013). This study categorized errors into sentence-level, word-level, and mechanical types, offering insights into learners' interlanguage development.

2.1.3 Error Description and Classification

Errors were compared with standard target forms in order to identify violated rules (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Key error types included omission (e.g., “He’ll pass his exam, and I’ll [] too”), addition (“He doesn’t knows me”), misinformation (“I seen her yesterday”), and misordering (“I and my old friend”). These classifications provided a detailed understanding of linguistic patterns and challenges.

2.1.4 Error Explanation

The sources of errors were analyzed in order to distinguish interlingual and intralingual factors (Gass et al., 2013). Interlingual errors, such as “I play a computer” for “I work on a computer,” reflected first-language transfer (Kaweera, 2013). Intralingual errors, such as “childs” for “children,” stemmed from overgeneralization or misanalysis of English rules (James, 2013).

2.1.5 Error Evaluation

The present study assessed the severity of errors by distinguishing between global errors, which disrupted meaning, and local errors, which primarily affected form (Burt, 1975). For example, the omission of connectors in “not take this bus, we late for school” disrupted clarity, while “two website” indicated plural agreement issues but did not hinder comprehension. By applying this streamlined error analysis framework, the study identified the patterns in learners’ interlanguage development and provided insights for addressing persistent challenges. This approach emphasizes practical strategies to improve EFL writing instruction and outcomes. The following section summarizes prior research on error analysis in EFL learners, providing a thorough understanding of common challenges in a variety of contexts.

2.2 Past Studies on English Writing Errors among Thai EFL Learners

Several Thai-based studies from 2013 to 2021 provide valuable insights into EFL learners' writing errors and their instructional implications. Kaweera (2013), for example, identified the interlingual errors resulting from direct Thai-to-English translation, such as unnatural phrasing and misordered syntax, and Phoocharoensil et al. (2016) found that verb-related errors, especially issues with subject and verb agreement, were the most common. These were attributed to both first language influence and confusion within the target language system. In addition, Waelateh et al. (2019) focused on multilingual Thai learners and found spelling errors to be the most frequent, which were linked to limited vocabulary and lack of exposure to accurate models, and Kampookaew (2020) reported that noun-related issues, especially incorrect pluralization, were the most prominent. The errors were caused by both interlingual and intralingual factors. Further, Suraprajit (2021) documented problems such as article omission, incorrect prepositions, and subject omission, and explained them as signs of incomplete grammatical learning. Overall, these studies reflect a shift from focusing only on language transfer to recognizing more complex challenges related to internal language processing. They emphasize the importance of targeted grammar instruction and form-focused feedback in improving Thai EFL learners' writing accuracy.

2.3 Research Questions

While many studies have examined the grammatical and lexical errors among Thai EFL learners, there is a need for research specifically focused on their written errors, particularly as online translators and generative AI tools become increasingly integrated into their writing practices. This study aimed to address this gap by analyzing the grammatical errors in the students' in-class writing tasks.

The present study was conducted in order to address two research questions:

1. What types of grammatical errors are found in English writing produced by Thai EFL university students, and how frequently do these errors occur?

2. What are Thai EFL university students' attitudes, writing approaches, challenges, and commonly used strategies and resources during the writing process?

3. Methodology

This section outlines the methodological framework employed in order to examine the grammatical errors in English writing produced by Thai EFL students and to explore the writing strategies and resources that they commonly used. It details the participants and sampling procedures, describes the research instruments, explains how the data were collected, and presents the analytical approaches used for both the qualitative and quantitative data. The aim was to ensure a comprehensive understanding of students' written output and the contextual factors influencing their writing practices.

3.1 Participants and Sampling

The participants in this study constituted an intact group of students who were enrolled in English in Music and Movies, a free elective course offered at a private university in Thailand. The aim of the course was to help students explore English through music and movies, enhancing their appreciation and expression through written critiques and presentations. The sample included 70 undergraduate students, aged between 19 and 23 years, who came from various academic disciplines: Communication Arts, Law, Humanities and Tourism Management, Business Administration, Information Technology and Innovation, Digital Media and Cinematic Arts, and Bangkok University Chinese International (majoring in Business Chinese). Of the 70 participants, 39 were third-year students, 25 were fourth-year students, and six were post-fourth-year students.

Before taking this elective course, all of the participants had completed three compulsory General English courses: Everyday English, Social English, and Global English. These General English courses provided foundational language skills from beginner to pre-intermediate levels and supported the development of

core skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with the aim of preparing students to progress toward becoming independent users of the English language. Most of the participants were taught primarily in Thai, with English learning largely confined to classroom settings.

3.2 Instruments

Two primary instruments were used in this study: a writing task and a questionnaire. For the writing task, the participants were asked to write a 60–100 word descriptive paragraph on the topic “My Favorite Song or Movie” during a 60-minute in-class session, and in order to ensure that the writing reflected their authentic ability, the students were required to use only pen and paper, with no access to electronic devices or online resources. The goal of this task was to diagnose the students’ writing competence, following Brown’s (2018) view that diagnostic assessment can identify key learning needs and inform curriculum design.

The second instrument was a 14-item questionnaire adapted from Wang and Zhang (2017), rated on a five-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire assessed the students’ attitudes, writing approaches, and the resources that they typically used. An additional section collected information on the specific tools that the students had relied on to support their writing—such as textbooks, peer help, websites, translation tools, and generative AI platforms. This data provided insight into the students’ writing habits and strategy preferences.

The questionnaire was selected and adapted because it covered a broad range of key factors related to English writing, including students’ attitudes, writing approaches, sources of support, existing challenges, and self-assessment. These dimensions are essential for informing curriculum development and instructional practices, particularly in educational settings that are rapidly evolving with technological advancements. Moreover, the questionnaire was accessible and

appropriate for non-English major students, making it particularly suitable for the participants in this study.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place during regular class hours. The writing task was administered under controlled conditions in order to ensure that the student output reflected their individual writing ability without external assistance. Immediately following the writing task, the questionnaire was distributed, and the students responded anonymously. The writing samples were collected and analyzed in order to identify the grammatical errors, while the questionnaire responses provided complementary insights into the students' writing behaviors and strategy use. Together, these instruments offered a dual perspective: both the linguistic outcomes of the students and the contextual factors influencing their writing.

3.4 Data Analysis

The written samples were analyzed using the five-stage error analysis model adapted from Phoocharoensil et al. (2016), originally based on Corder (1967) and later refined by James (2013). Phoocharoensil et al.'s (2016) framework was selected for its practical applicability to classroom-based EFL contexts in Thailand, making it particularly suitable for the current study. The five stages included: 1) collection of learner language samples; 2) identification of errors; 3) description and classification of errors; 4) explanation of errors; and 5) evaluation of errors.

Errors were defined as deviations from standard British or American English, based on *Practical English Usage* (Swan, 2005) and the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al., 1999). Lexical errors were cross-checked using online dictionaries such as those of Cambridge and Longman. All of the errors were categorized and analyzed in order to determine whether they stemmed from interlingual or intralingual sources.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using Microsoft Excel, with descriptive statistics calculated for each item and subscale. Following the approach used in Wang and Zhang's (2017) questionnaire, scores above 3.0 indicated a generally active or positive orientation toward writing, while scores below 3.0 suggested disengagement or writing-related difficulties. This analysis helped identify students' self-reported challenges, attitudes, and the influence of digital tools on their writing strategies.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings from the error analysis and questionnaire, addressing the two research questions outlined at the beginning of the study.

4.1 Grammatical Errors in Thai EFL University Students' writing

4.1.1 Frequency and Distribution of Errors

This study classified errors into three main categories: mechanical errors, word-level errors, and sentence-level errors. A total of 20 distinct error types were identified in the English writing of Thai EFL university students.

- Mechanical errors included punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and contractions.
- Word-level errors covered nouns, verbs, prepositions, articles, word choice, parts of speech, pronouns, and adjectives.
- Sentence-level errors encompassed subject-verb agreement, word order, sentence fragments, redundancy, voice, tense, run-on sentences, and relative clauses.

Table 1 provides an overview of the types, frequency, percentage, and ranking of these errors.

Table 1*Categories, types, percentages, and rank of errors*

| Category | Types of Errors | Frequency | Percentage | Rank |
|--|------------------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| <i>Mechanical errors</i> <i>(145 tokens, 44.21%)</i> | Punctuation | 75 | 22.87 | 1 |
| | Capitalization | 40 | 12.20 | 2 |
| | Spelling | 29 | 8.84 | 4 |
| | Contraction | 1 | 0.30 | 20 |
| <i>Word-level errors</i> <i>(127 tokens, 38.72%)</i> | Nouns | 38 | 11.59 | 3 |
| | Verbs | 26 | 7.93 | 5 |
| | Prepositions | 23 | 7.01 | 6 |
| | Articles | 15 | 4.57 | 8 |
| | Word choices | 12 | 3.66 | 9 |
| | Parts of speech | 8 | 2.44 | 12 |
| | Pronouns | 4 | 1.22 | 16 |
| | Adjectives | 1 | 0.30 | 19 |
| | Subject-verb agreement | 17 | 5.18 | 7 |
| <i>Sentence-level errors</i> <i>(56 tokens, 17.07%)</i> | Word order | 9 | 2.74 | 10 |
| | Fragment | 9 | 2.74 | 11 |
| | Redundancy | 7 | 2.13 | 13 |
| | Voice | 5 | 1.52 | 15 |
| | Tense | 5 | 1.52 | 14 |
| | Run-on | 2 | 0.61 | 17 |
| | Relative clause | 2 | 0.61 | 18 |
| | Total | 328 | 100 | 20 |

As shown in Table 1, mechanical errors were the most frequent (44.21% of all errors), with punctuation errors ranking highest (22.87%), followed by capitalization (12.20%) and spelling (8.84%). This suggests that Thai EFL university students struggle significantly with the mechanical aspects of writing, particularly punctuation. Word-level errors accounted for 38.72% of all errors. Noun-related errors (11.59%) were the most common, indicating difficulties with pluralization and noun forms. Verb errors (7.93%) and preposition errors (7.01%) were also prevalent, reflecting common issues in verb forms and prepositional usage. Errors

involving articles, word choice, and parts of speech were moderately frequent, while pronoun and adjective errors were minimal (<2%).

Sentence-level errors constituted 17.07% of the total, with subject-verb agreement being the most prominent issue (5.18%). Errors related to word order and sentence fragments followed at 2.74% each. Issues such as redundancy, voice, and tense occurred less frequently, suggesting that structural errors were less common compared to mechanical and word-level mistakes. Run-on sentences and relative clause errors were the least frequent (0.61% each).

A closer examination revealed that the nine most prevalent errors involved punctuation, capitalization, nouns, spelling, verbs, prepositions, articles, word choice, and word order, which highlights key areas for pedagogical intervention.

4.1.2 Types of Grammatical Errors Identified

This section presents the frequently observed error types, organized into three main categories: mechanical errors, word-level errors, and sentence-level errors.

4.1.2.1 Mechanical Errors

Mechanical errors are surface-level issues in writing that affect both readability and accuracy. Mechanical errors involve an error in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (Oguan & Del Valle, 2022). These types of errors are often overlooked by learners but significantly impact the overall quality and clarity of written communication. In this study, mechanical errors were the most frequently observed category among the Thai EFL university students.

Spelling errors were common and fell into four categories: incorrect letters, missing letters, hyphen omission, and unnecessary spacing. Examples included “*vary*” for “*very*,” “*wach*” for “*watch*,” and “*hiphop music*” instead of “*hip-hop music*.” Students also separated compounds such as “*some times*” instead of

“sometimes.” These errors reflect struggles with English spelling and orthographic rules, highlighting the need for explicit instruction in spelling, hyphenation, and compound word usage.

Punctuation errors were the most frequent mechanical errors, consistent with Sermsook et al. (2017), and were categorized as omission, misformation, and addition. Commas and periods were the most problematic, likely due to the structural differences between Thai and English. Students often omitted necessary punctuation, such as in *“I like dogs and my sister has a brown dog,”* which should be *“I like dogs, and my sister has a brown dog,”* and *“That’s all about me Thank you,”* which should be *“That’s all about me. Thank you.”* Misformation included comma splices such as *“I’m Miguel, I’m 20 years old,”* instead of using a period. Addition errors involved inserting unnecessary commas, as in *“I like puppies, because they are so cute,”* which should be *“I like puppies because they are so cute.”* These issues highlight the need for focused instruction on sentence boundaries and punctuation use.

Capitalization errors were common and mainly involved failing to capitalize proper nouns, sentence openings, and the pronoun *“I.”* For instance, in *“I like hip-hop music, so my favorite rapper is travis scott,”* the name *“travis scott”* should be capitalized. Similarly, *“i’m 20 years old”* used a lowercase *“i”* instead of *“I.”* These mistakes may result from unfamiliarity with capitalization rules or carelessness. Instructional reinforcement and proofreading strategies can help learners correct these errors and improve the formality and accuracy of their writing.

4.1.2.2 Word-level Errors

Word-level errors are grammatical mistakes within individual words or word combinations that affect both form and meaning. Following Kampookaew’s (2020) categorization, this study identified five major types: verb, noun, article, preposition, and word choice errors. These reflect common learner difficulties with

essential grammar and vocabulary, often caused by incomplete language acquisition, L1 interference, or overgeneralization of English rules.

Verb errors were common and fell into four categories: subject-verb agreement, tense misuse, incorrect use of the verb *be*, and confusion between gerunds and to-infinitives. For example, “*This song impress me...*” and “*it make me happy*” should be “*impresses*” and “*makes*” to agree with the subject. Tense errors appeared in “*I watched comedy movies...*” which should be “*watch*” for habitual action. Errors with *be* included omissions such as “*I crazy about superhero movies*” instead of “*I am crazy...*” and unnecessary insertions such as “*I like the song is...*” Confusion over non-finite verbs was seen in “*I like to watching movies*” and “*I enjoy watch...*” which should be “*to watch*” and “*enjoy watching.*” These issues point to a need for targeted instruction on verb forms and usage.

Noun errors were another common issue and typically involved the omission of plural suffixes or the misuse of plural forms with uncountable nouns. For example, in “*In my free time, I like to watch romantic comedy movie,*” the singular “*movie*” should be pluralized as “*movies.*” Conversely, “*musics*” in “*listening to musics*” incorrectly applies pluralization to an uncountable noun. These patterns indicate that students may struggle with distinguishing countable from uncountable nouns, a challenge frequently noted in the literature (Kampookaew, 2020; Phoocharoensil et al., 2016).

Article errors were also widespread and fell into two primary types: omission and addition. Omission errors were evident in sentences such as “*I listen to variety of music,*” which should be “*I listen to a variety of music.*” Addition errors included the use of unnecessary articles, such as in “*It gives me a motivation to work out,*” where “*a*” should be removed since “*motivation*” is uncountable in this context. These issues likely stem from the absence of an article system in Thai, resulting in confusion about when articles are required or prohibited.

Preposition errors were frequently observed and categorized as omission, incorrect selection, and unnecessary addition. A common omission was found in *“I love to listen music,”* which lacks the preposition *“to,”* while incorrect selection appeared in *“I’m really interested to reading Chinese novels,”* where *“to”* should be replaced with *“in.”* The unnecessary addition of prepositions was also noted, as in *“I like both of cats and dogs,”* where *“of”* is superfluous. These errors highlight Thai learners’ difficulties with English prepositional use, especially verb-preposition collocations.

Finally, word choice errors reflected students’ struggles with selecting contextually and grammatically appropriate vocabulary. These errors were often due to limited vocabulary range, L1 interference, or misunderstanding of word functions. For instance, in *“A movie that I favorite ever is Avengers: Endgame,”* the adjective *“favorite”* is incorrectly used as a verb. A more accurate expression would be *“A movie that I love the most is Avengers: Endgame.”* Such misuse emphasizes the need for explicit instruction on vocabulary usage, collocations, and part-of-speech distinctions in order to enhance clarity and precision in writing.

4.1.2.3 Sentence-level Errors

Sentence-level errors are grammatical issues that disrupt sentence structure and coherence. As noted by James (2013), they involve how clauses are selected and combined. This study identified two main types: sentence structure and word order errors. These problems often stem from L1 influence, limited exposure to natural English, or insufficient grammar knowledge.

The sentence structure errors included run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and comma splices. These types of errors typically resulted from an incomplete understanding of how to properly form independent and dependent clauses in English. For example, a sentence such as *“That’s all about me Thank you”* demonstrates a run-on sentence where punctuation is missing to separate two complete thoughts. The correct version would be *“That’s all about me. Thank*

you.” Another common sentence structure issue involved comma splices, where students improperly joined two independent clauses with just a comma. In the sentence *“I’m Miguel, I’m 20 years old,”* a comma splice occurs. The correct sentence should read: *“I’m Miguel. I’m 20 years old.”* These errors illustrate a lack of clarity regarding punctuation rules and sentence boundaries, which often results in awkward or incorrect constructions. Addressing these problems requires targeted instruction on sentence patterns, including how to combine clauses using conjunctions, punctuation, or sentence breaks.

Word order errors were another frequent issue among Thai EFL learners and often stemmed from direct translation from Thai to English or a lack of familiarity with standard English syntactic patterns. These errors affected the natural flow and readability of the sentences. For example, in *“I like music pop,”* the noun *“music”* precedes the adjective *“pop,”* which contradicts the typical English order of adjective + noun. The corrected sentence should be *“I like pop music.”* Similarly, in *“I like to watch drama coming of age,”* the placement of *“coming of age”* after the noun *“drama”* creates confusion. The correct phrasing is *“I like to watch coming-of-age dramas.”* These word order issues suggest that learners may benefit from increased exposure to well-formed sentence models and guided practice in rearranging sentence elements to reflect natural English structure. Overall, sentence-level errors reflect broader challenges in constructing clear and grammatically correct sentences. Addressing these issues requires focused instruction in sentence structure, word order, and punctuation in order to clarify relationships between sentence elements.

4.1.3 Sources of Errors

This study identified mechanical errors, especially in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, as the most frequent among Thai EFL students. Sentence-level errors were less common, indicating that students mainly struggled with surface-level writing accuracy. In identifying the causes of these errors, both interlingual and intralingual factors were found to contribute. Interlingual errors,

such as subject-verb agreement and article misuse, reflected direct interference from the Thai language. In contrast, intralingual errors, including overgeneralization and incomplete mastery of grammatical rules, were evident in issues such as tense misuse, incorrect prepositions, and fragmented sentence construction. These findings are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2

Sources of errors

| Rank | Types of Errors | Interlingual | Intralingual |
|------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | Punctuation | | ✓ |
| 2 | Capitalization | | ✓ |
| 3 | Nouns | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4 | Spelling | | ✓ |
| 5 | Verbs | | ✓ |
| 6 | Prepositions | | ✓ |
| 7 | Subject-verb agreement | ✓ | |
| 8 | Articles | ✓ | |
| 9 | Word choices | ✓ | |
| 10 | Word order | ✓ | |
| 11 | Fragment | | ✓ |
| 12 | Parts of speech | | ✓ |
| 13 | Redundancy | | ✓ |
| 14 | Tense | | ✓ |
| 15 | Voice | | ✓ |
| 16 | Pronouns | ✓ | |
| 17 | Run-on | | ✓ |
| 18 | Relative clause | | ✓ |
| 19 | Adjectives | | ✓ |
| 20 | Contraction | | ✓ |

Table 2 summarizes the observed grammatical errors and their probable sources, with the error types arranged in descending order of frequency. Errors in punctuation, capitalization, noun usage, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and word order were among the most commonly occurring. These issues were linked to interlingual interference (e.g., structural differences between Thai and English), intralingual challenges (e.g., rule overgeneralization and incomplete

grammatical knowledge), and the overall complexity of English grammar. Errors such as fragments and run-ons reflected broader structural difficulties, while mistakes such as those with spelling and redundancy may indicate carelessness during the writing process.

These findings align with prior research (e.g., Kampookaew, 2020; Phoocharoensil et al., 2016; Sermsook et al., 2017), which similarly emphasized the central role of interlingual and intralingual factors in the grammatical difficulties experienced by EFL learners. In this study, all of the identified errors were classified according to these two primary sources. This focus provides a clearer understanding of how language transfer and internal language processing contribute to learners' writing challenges and supports the development of targeted instructional strategies to address them.

4.1.3.1 Interlingual Interference

Interlingual interference, caused by Thai language influence, was a major source of grammatical errors among the participants. A common issue was noun errors, especially plural omission, as in *"romantic comedy movie"* instead of *"romantic comedy movies,"* reflecting the lack of plural forms in Thai. Subject-verb agreement problems, such as *"It give me motivation"* instead of *"It gives me motivation,"* also stemmed from the absence of such rules in Thai. Article misuse was frequent, with sentences such as *"I'm third-year student"* showing the effect of Thai's lack of articles. Flexible Thai syntax also led to word order errors, such as *"The most song that I like is..."* instead of *"The song I like the most is..."*. These findings align with Phoocharoensil et al. (2016), Sermsook et al. (2017), and Kampookaew (2020), and underscore the need for instruction that contrasts Thai and English grammar in order to reduce transfer-related errors.

4.1.3.2 Intralingual interference

Intralingual interference, stemming from the students' internal processing of English, was a key source of their grammatical errors. Unlike interlingual errors

influenced by L1, these arose from rule overgeneralization, incomplete learning, or misunderstandings of grammar. Common issues included punctuation and capitalization mistakes, such as missing commas in compound sentences and failing to capitalize proper nouns or the pronoun “I.” Prepositional errors were frequent, as seen in *“I like to listen classical music”* instead of *“I like to listen to classical music,”* showing difficulty with verb-preposition collocations. Verb errors included omission of auxiliaries, e.g., *“I crazy about movies”* instead of *“I am crazy about movies,”* and tense misuse, such as *“After I watching movies, I always happy.”* The students also overgeneralized grammar rules, producing forms such as *“musics”* for the uncountable noun *“music.”* These errors point to gaps in grammatical understanding and highlight the need for explicit instruction, sustained feedback, and structured practice in order to help students internalize accurate language use.

To further illustrate the nature and sources of grammatical errors observed in this study, Table 3 presents representative student errors, categorized by type and source as either interlingual (influenced by Thai) or intralingual (due to incomplete understanding of English grammar).

Table 3
Examples and sources of grammatical errors in Thai EFL students’ writing

| Error Type | Example | Source of Error |
|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Plural noun omission | <i>“romantic comedy movie”</i> instead of <i>“romantic comedy movies”</i> | Interlingual |
| Subject-verb agreement | <i>“It give me motivation”</i> instead of <i>“It gives me motivation”</i> | Interlingual |
| Article omission | <i>“I’m third-year student”</i> instead of <i>“I’m a third-year student”</i> | Interlingual |
| Word order | <i>“The most song that I like is...”</i> instead of <i>“The song I like the most is...”</i> | Interlingual |
| Capitalization | <i>“i’m 20 years old”</i> instead of <i>“I’m 20 years old”</i> | Intralingual |

| Error Type | Example | Source of Error |
|------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Punctuation (comma splice) | <i>"I'm Miguel, I'm 20 years old."</i> | Intralingual |
| Verb tense misuse | <i>"After I watching movies, I always happy"</i> | Intralingual |
| Auxiliary verb omission | <i>"I crazy about movies"</i> instead of <i>"I am crazy about movies"</i> | Intralingual |
| Preposition omission | <i>"listen classical music"</i> instead of <i>"listen to classical music"</i> | Intralingual |
| Overgeneralization (plural) | <i>"musics"</i> instead of <i>"music"</i> | Intralingual |

This study found that Thai EFL students' grammatical errors mainly stemmed from interlingual and intralingual interference. Interlingual errors, such as article omission and subject-verb disagreement, reflected L1 influence, while intralingual errors arose from overgeneralization and limited grammatical knowledge. Spelling and redundancy issues were likely due to carelessness, which, as Oguan and Del Valle (2022) suggest, can be reduced through dictionary use and spell-check tools. These findings highlight the need for explicit grammar instruction and strategies that foster accuracy, attention to detail, and self-editing skills.

4.2 Thai University EFL Students' Attitudes, Writing Approaches, Challenges, and Resources

This study utilized the 14-item questionnaire by Wang and Zhang (2017) mentioned previously in order to explore the factors influencing English writing proficiency, focusing on students' attitudes, strategies, challenges, and preferred resources. Table 4 summarizes the findings on attitudes, writing approaches, and challenges, while Table 5 highlights the resources that Thai EFL students used for writing.

Table 4

Survey results on students' attitudes, approaches, and challenges in English writing

| Aspects | Statements | Mean | SD |
|--|---|------|-------|
| Attitudes towards English writing | I enjoy English writing. | 3.29 | 0.795 |
| | I believe that practicing writing in English is important for more than just exams. | 4.20 | 0.935 |
| Approaches of English writing | I would use English writing in everyday contexts such as sending messages, using social media, or keeping a personal diary. | 3.87 | 0.827 |
| | I believe we need a lot of writing exercises to develop our writing skills. | 3.77 | 1.017 |
| | I could set a writing goal for myself and stick to it. | 3.27 | 0.893 |
| | I typically complete my writing exercise with the assistance of a teacher. | 3.53 | 1.092 |
| The existing problems of English writing | Rich vocabulary is important for English writing. | 4.71 | 0.482 |
| | Writing in English is made easier by using templates and reciting vocabulary. | 4.33 | 0.670 |
| | English writing is based on a large number of English readings. | 4.01 | 0.784 |
| | I would make an outline before writing. | 3.63 | 0.848 |
| | When writing in English, I always organize the text in my native language first, then translate it. | 3.93 | 0.961 |
| | I would prioritize the coherence and fluency of language in the English writing process. | 3.76 | 0.745 |
| | After finishing English writing, I usually review and revise. | 4.07 | 0.816 |
| | | | |

4.2.1 Attitudes Toward English Writing

The questionnaire results revealed that Thai EFL students generally held a moderately positive attitude toward English writing. The statement “I enjoy English writing” received a mean score of 3.29 (SD = 0.795), indicating a neutral to slightly positive response. However, a much stronger agreement was observed for the statement “I believe that practicing writing in English is important for more than just exams,” which had a high mean score of 4.20 (SD = 0.935). This suggests that

while not all students found writing inherently enjoyable, most acknowledged its broader importance beyond academic assessments.

These findings reflected a trend where students may not feel emotionally connected to writing but recognize its value for communication and personal growth. The relatively high standard deviation in some responses also pointed to the variability in the students' confidence and motivation, which may be influenced by differences in proficiency, learning experiences, and support systems.

4.2.2 Writing Approaches and Challenges

The students reported using a variety of strategies to support their English writing. For instance, many indicated they apply writing skills in everyday contexts ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.827$), and a majority believe in the importance of frequent writing practice ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.017$). The responses also suggested a level of autonomous learning, with moderate agreement for statements such as “I could set a writing goal for myself and stick to it” ($M = 3.27$) and “I typically complete my writing exercise with the assistance of a teacher” ($M = 3.53$).

However, the data also highlight several challenges. The strongest consensus was found in the students' acknowledgment of the importance of vocabulary for writing ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.482$). Similarly, many students agreed that writing is supported by templates and vocabulary memorization ($M = 4.33$), and that reading extensively in English contributes to writing development ($M = 4.01$). A common strategy among the students was to translate from Thai to English, as indicated by the statement “I always organize the text in my native language first, then translate it” ($M = 3.93$). This approach may reflect a reliance on L1 structures, which could lead to transfer-related errors.

Regarding writing process behaviors, most of the students reported that they review and revise their work after finishing ($M = 4.07$), and a fair number indicated that they use outlining techniques ($M = 3.63$). These findings suggest

that while learners understand the key components of effective writing, such as planning and revision, their execution may still be influenced by linguistic limitations, time constraints, or writing anxiety.

4.2.3 Commonly used Writing Resources

In order to better understand the resources that students relied on during the writing process, the survey included items related to both traditional and digital tools. Table 5 summarizes the frequency of use, highlighting preferences across textbooks, peer and teacher support, websites, translation tools, and generative AI.

Table 5

Survey on the writing sources used by the Thai EFL students

| Writing Sources | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | SD |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|------|-------|
| Class textbooks | 1 | 5 | 2.74 | 1.091 |
| Supplementary materials | 1 | 5 | 3.34 | 1.068 |
| Websites | 2 | 5 | 4.43 | 0.728 |
| Teachers | 1 | 5 | 3.46 | 0.981 |
| Friends | 1 | 5 | 3.44 | 1.142 |
| Google Translate | 3 | 5 | 4.50 | 0.692 |
| Generative AI | 2 | 5 | 4.37 | 0.778 |

The survey results revealed that Thai EFL university students drew upon a variety of resources to support their English writing, with a clear preference for digital tools over more traditional methods. Among all of the sources, Google Translate was the most frequently used ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.692$), followed closely by websites ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.728$) and generative AI tools such as ChatGPT ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.778$). These high mean scores reflected a strong inclination toward digital assistance, likely due to the accessibility, speed, and perceived convenience of online tools.

In contrast, more traditional resources, such as class textbooks ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.091$), were used significantly less frequently. Other moderately used resources included supplementary materials ($M = 3.34$), teachers ($M = 3.46$), and friends or peers ($M = 3.44$), suggesting that while human support remained valuable, it may be secondary to immediate digital feedback in these students' writing routines.

Such findings have suggested that the increasing availability of translation platforms and AI-based writing tools helps shape students' writing behaviors. The widespread use of digital resources may offer benefits such as enhanced vocabulary use and sentence structure, but it also raises concerns about overreliance and reduced opportunities for students to internalize grammatical rules independently. Thus, it is important for educators to guide students in using these tools critically and ethically, while also reinforcing foundational writing skills that promote long-term language development.

4.3 Summary of the Key Findings

This study examined the grammatical errors in Thai EFL students' writing and categorized them into mechanical, word-level, and sentence-level errors. Mechanical errors, especially punctuation and capitalization, were the most frequent. These issues were largely caused by interlingual interference—stemming from Thai-English structural differences—and intralingual interference, such as overgeneralization or incomplete understanding of English rules, supporting the findings by Kampookaew (2020), Phoocharoensil et al. (2016), and Sermsook et al. (2017).

The survey revealed that while students expressed moderate enjoyment in writing, they strongly recognized its value beyond exams. They emphasized the importance of vocabulary, planning, and revision, echoing Mahmudah's (2014) assertion of vocabulary's strong link to writing ability.

Digital tools were heavily favored, with Google Translate, websites, and generative AI tools being the most frequently used resources. This aligns with Chompurach (2021) and Tsai (2020), who found that learners perceive such tools as effective in improving writing quality. However, without proper guidance, overreliance on these tools may hinder long-term learning. Therefore, teacher support and ethical guidelines, as emphasized by Mizumoto et al. (2024), remain essential for responsible and effective use of writing technologies.

5. Pedagogical Implications

Based on the findings of this study, several pedagogical implications can be drawn in order to improve the writing proficiency of Thai EFL learners. First, raising learners' language awareness is essential. Hawkins (1984) suggests that general language awareness, including grammar, should be developed even before formal L2 instruction begins. In practice, this means helping students notice how English differs from their native language, particularly in structural areas where transfer errors are common.

Second, grammar instruction should blend both focus on form (FonF) and focus on forms (FonFs) approaches. FonF encourages learners to notice grammatical features during meaningful communication (Long, 1991), and this can be especially effective when integrated into communicative tasks, as recommended by Saengboon (2017). However, persistent rule-based issues such as errors in punctuation, capitalization, contractions, verb tenses, and pluralization often require explicit instruction through grammar drills, rule explanations, and worksheets. A combined approach allows learners to gain both structural knowledge and functional application.

Third, written corrective feedback (WCF) remains a powerful tool for language development. One way to enhance its effectiveness is by using error logs, where students document their errors, categorize them, and provide explanations and corrections. Lau et al. (2024) found that this approach significantly improved

learners' writing accuracy, with notable gains between pre-test and post-test scores. In addition to teacher feedback, automated written corrective feedback (AWCF) tools, such as Grammarly, as examined by Guo et al. (2021) and Koltovskaia (2020), offer immediate and personalized suggestions. Rahimi et al. (2024) also highlight the positive impact of such tools on both writing performance and learners' overall experience. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to combine traditional WCF with AWCF, providing learners with opportunities for reflection and more effective self-correction.

Lastly, the use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT should be introduced with clear guidance. Research by Chompurach (2021) and Tsai (2020) confirms that students perceive these tools as helpful in improving sentence structure and paragraph coherence. However, Khampusaen (2025) expresses concerns about the potential risks regarding academic integrity posed by the unsupervised use of such tools. Therefore, educators should promote their use in a structured way, encouraging students to pair AI-generated suggestions with their own critical thinking and grammar knowledge. When used alongside error logs, it is likely that generative AI tools can support self-directed learning, increase metalinguistic awareness, and improve overall writing quality.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the grammatical errors made by Thai EFL university students and explored their writing strategies and challenges through both writing samples and survey responses. In essence, this study attempted to revisit the grammatical errors inadvertently produced through digital technology. The findings revealed that mechanical errors, particularly punctuation and capitalization, were the most frequent, while word- and sentence-level errors reflected both interlingual and intralingual influences. The learners also reported frequent reliance on digital tools such as Google Translate and ChatGPT. These results suggest the importance of combining explicit grammar instruction with guided use of AI tools in the classroom. In addition, learner-centered strategies such as

maintaining error logs may support reflection and long-term accuracy. Future studies could explore how sustained AI-assisted feedback and reflective strategies impact writing development among EFL learners.

7. About the Author

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