

Error Analysis in English Abstracts Written by Veterinary Students in Northeast Thailand

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาชนิดของความผิดพลาดในบทคัดย่อฉบับภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาสัตวแพทย์ในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของประเทศไทย และ 2) วิเคราะห์ความถี่และร้อยละของความผิดพลาดทางการเขียนในบทคัดย่อฉบับภาษาอังกฤษดังกล่าว ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ใช้บทคัดย่อฉบับภาษาอังกฤษจำนวน 26 ฉบับสำหรับการวิเคราะห์ความผิดพลาดทางการเขียนทั้งในระดับประโยคและระดับคำ

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า นักศึกษาสัตวแพทย์เขียนบทคัดย่อฉบับภาษาอังกฤษประกอบด้วยจำนวนคำเฉลี่ย 157.58 ± 38.15 คำ บรรทัดเฉลี่ย 10.23 ± 2.52 บรรทัด และความผิดพลาดในการเขียนเฉลี่ย 16.65 ± 8.83 ครั้ง นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่าบทคัดย่อทุกฉบับประกอบด้วยความผิดพลาดทางการเขียนทั้งในระดับประโยคและระดับคำ จากการวิเคราะห์บทคัดย่อทุกฉบับ พบความผิดพลาดทางการเขียนทั้งหมด 433 ครั้ง แบ่งออกเป็นความผิดพลาดระดับประโยคจำนวน 238 ครั้ง และระดับคำจำนวน 195 ครั้ง เมื่อพิจารณาเฉพาะระดับประโยค ความผิดพลาดที่พบได้แก่ อักษรพิมพ์ใหญ่ (88.0%) เครื่องหมายวรรคตอน (47.0%) ความสอดคล้องของประธานและกริยา (46.0%) ประโยคต่อเนื่อง (21.0%) ประโยคไม่สมบูรณ์ (19.0%) การเรียงลำดับคำ (9.0%) และกาล (8.0%) เมื่อพิจารณาเฉพาะระดับคำ ความผิดพลาดที่พบได้แก่ การเลือกคำ (26.79%) คำบุพบท (8.78%) คำนาม (7.16%) และคำนำหน้าคำนาม (2.31%)

โดยสรุป ความผิดพลาดทางการเขียนระดับประโยคที่พบมากในบทคัดย่อฉบับภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาสัตวแพทย์ในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของประเทศไทย ได้แก่ อักษรพิมพ์ใหญ่ เครื่องหมายวรรคตอน และความสอดคล้องของประธานและกริยา ส่วนความผิดพลาดทางการเขียนระดับคำที่พบมาก ได้แก่ การเลือกคำ และคำบุพบท ซึ่งสาเหตุหลักของความผิดพลาดทางการเขียนที่เกิดขึ้นในการเขียนบทคัดย่อฉบับภาษาอังกฤษมีสาเหตุจากความรู้ทางด้านภาษาศาสตร์ที่ไม่เพียงพอของผู้เขียน โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งความรู้ด้านวากยสัมพันธ์ และความหมายของคำ

คำสำคัญ : บทคัดย่อ ความผิดพลาด นักศึกษาสัตวแพทย์ การเขียน

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ABSTRACT

The present study was to 1) investigate types of errors in English abstract written by veterinary students in northeast Thailand and 2) analyze frequency and percentage of writing errors in their English abstracts. In total, 26 English abstracts were included in the study. Error analyses were performed both in sentential and word levels.

The results demonstrated that they produced abstracts with approximately 157.58 ± 38.15 words, 10.23 ± 2.52 lines, and 16.65 ± 8.83 points of writing error. Moreover, every abstract consisted of errors both in sentential and word levels. In total, 433 points of error were found and categorized in sentential and word levels for 238 and 195 points, respectively. Based on sentential level, errors included capital letter (88.0%), punctuation (47.0%), subject-verb agreement (46.0%), run-on (21.0%), fragment (19.0%), word order (9.0%), and tense (8.0%). Considering word level, errors included word choice (26.79%), preposition (8.78%), noun (7.16%), and article (2.31%). However, number error was not observed from any abstracts of the MSU veterinary students.

In summary, the most eminent errors in sentential level were capital letter, punctuation, and subject-verb agreement, meanwhile those in word level included word choice, preposition, and noun. The major reason of their writing errors was an insufficient linguistic knowledge, especially in syntax and semantics.

Keywords : Abstract, Error, Veterinary Student, Writing

Introduction

Nowadays, English is considered an international language for scientific communication (Drubin & Kellogg, 2012). A number of scientists have conducted the studies in various aspects and tried to convey the outstanding results to the global arena by publishing their papers in many scientific journals. (Day & Gastel, 2006). In general, introduction, materials and methods, results, and discussion are the main structure of scientific papers. Moreover, an outstanding composition of the paper is an abstract, which is a concise summary of the research work prior to the introduction part (Simkhada, Van

Teijlingen, Hundley, & Simkhada, 2013). For some readers, abstract acts as a selling point of the paper because they read this as the first part and then make a decision whether to read other parts of the paper (Driggers, 2010; Rhodes, 2010). As a result, the abstract should be carefully prepared with the core contents of the study in an apprehensible organization (Alexandrov & Hennerici, 2007), in order to enchant the readers to pursue reading the entire paper (Dewan & Gupta, 2016). However, it is not easy for every researcher to accomplish international publications since writing is regarded as a complicated and taxing process for several authors, especially those who use

English as a second language (ESL) (Singh, Singh, Razak, & Ravinthar, 2017).

Based on four major skills of learning English, writing is recognized as the hardest skill, especially for those who use English as a foreign language (EFL) (Kaweera, 2013; Phuket & Othman, 2015; Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). As a result, it is unavoidable to observed writing errors from those who are learning language (James, 1998), especially from L2 writers since writing consists of complex procedures which test the capability of using language and expressing ideas of the writers. A former study, in Thailand, indicated that writing skill of ESL/ EFL students is under the satisfactory level even though a number of writing courses are provided, especially in the university level (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). Consequently, the analysis of errors in writing is considered one of the most important ways of second language acquisition (James, 2013) since it is the procedure of identifying occurrence, nature, cause, and sequel of unaccomplished language (James, 1998). In Thailand, several studies have been undertaken on the error analysis in writing of learners. For example, Noojan (1999) indicated that the most frequent errors found in writings of Thai students are classified into sentential and word levels. The errors in sentential level are fragments, run-ons, subject-verb agreements, word orders, and tenses. As for the errors in word level, they include articles, prepositions, and singular and plural nouns. Furthermore, Hengwichitkul (2006) defined the errors only in the sentential level which

include subject-verb agreements, parts of speech, participial phrases, relative clauses, passive voices, parallel structures, punctuations, fragments, and run-on. In addition, Runkati (2013) analyzed the writing tasks and classified the errors taken place into sentential and word levels as follows. However, a study on error analysis in scientific writing from veterinary students has never been reported. The present study aimed to investigate errors found in the abstract written veterinary students in a university in northeast Thailand.

Objectives

1. To identify writing errors in English abstracts written by veterinary students in northeast Thailand.
2. To analyze frequency and percentage of writing errors in sentential and word levels from English abstracts of veterinary students in northeast Thailand.

Methodology

Participants and Instruments

The present study was conducted in 26 undergraduate students, majoring in veterinary science, of a public university in northeast Thailand. All of them were those who registered for a seminar course.

Instruments

All of the participants were assigned to submit a review article in veterinary-related field according to the course requirement. In addition, an abstract of each article was mandatory to be written with

English. Moreover, the abstracts were not corrected for both language and contents prior to submission via email. The instrument for the present study is an English abstract from all of the veterinary students registering in seminar course.

Data Collection

All of the submitted abstracts consisted of personal data of the students, including title, first and last names, student identification number, supervisors' names, and date of submission. Thereafter, a teaching assistant modified all abstracts by excluding all personal data and assigning a code for each abstract. Finally, all abstract files with newly assigned codes were transferred to the analysts for investigating writing errors. In this study, writing errors were identified in sentence and word levels according to

Runkati (2013). For the sentential level, the analysis was reliant on fragment, run-on, subject-verb agreement, word order, tense, capital letter, and punctuation. As for word level, the analysis was dependent on article, preposition, word choice, noun, and number. Data collected for further analyses included word count, line count, errors both in sentential and word levels.

Data Analyses

All data were manipulated and analyzed by SAS version 9.0 (SAS Inst, Cary, NC, USA). Descriptive statistics were displayed with mean±SD. Moreover, frequency of each error type, categorized by sentential and word levels, was enumerated. Finally, percentage of each error type, classified by sentential and word levels, was calculated using the equations (1) and (2), respectively.

$$\text{Percentage of errors in sentential level} = \frac{\text{Number of each sentential error}}{\text{Total number of sentential errors}} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Percentage of errors in word level} = \frac{\text{Number of each word error}}{\text{Total number of word errors}} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

Results

General Information

In total, 26 English abstracts were retrieved from 11 male and 15 female veterinary students. Table 1 demonstrates descriptive data from all English abstracts

written by veterinary students in northeast Thailand. According to all abstracts were submitted with the fixed format according to the course instruction, the number of words and lines could be counted with the same manner.

Table 1 : Descriptive Statistics (Mean \pm SD) from English Abstracts (n=26) Written by Veterinary Students in Northeast Thailand

Variables	Mean \pm SD	Range
Word count per abstract	157.58 \pm 38.15	95.00-240.00
Line count per abstract	10.23 \pm 2.52	7.00-15.00
Error point per abstract	16.65 \pm 8.83	4.00-39.00

According to error analyses, the number of writing errors from all of the abstracts was 433 points. Figure 1 demonstrates

that they are 238 (54.97%) and 195 (45.03%) points of errors in sentential and word levels, respectively.

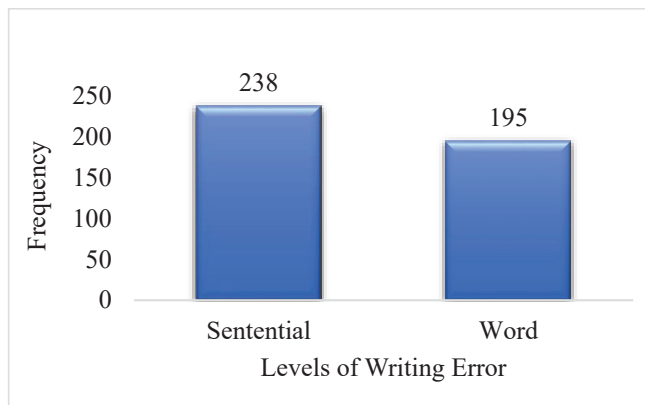


Figure 1 Frequency distribution of writing errors from 26 English abstracts written by veterinary students in northeast Thailand

Error analysis in sentential level

All types of writing errors in sentential level, including fragment, run-on, subject-verb agreement, word order, tense, capital letter, and punctuation, were observed in the analyzed abstracts. Frequency and

percentage of writing errors in sentential level are illustrated in Figure 2 and 3, respectively. It was found that the most common error type in sentential level found in the present study was capital letter (88.0%), meanwhile the least one was tense (8.0%).

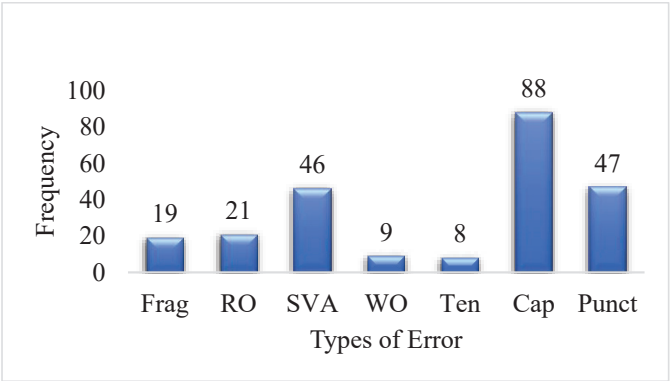


Figure 2 Frequency distribution of writing errors in sentential level from 26 English abstracts written by veterinary students in northeast Thailand. Frag = fragment, RO = run-on, SVA = subject-verb agreement, WO = word order, Ten = tense, Cap = capital letter, and Punct = punctuation.

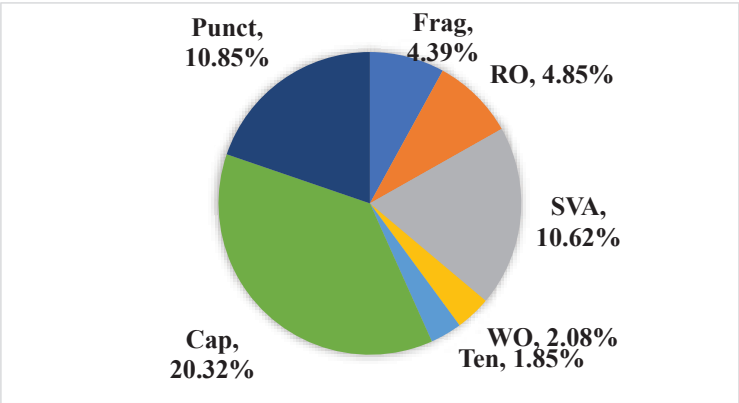


Figure 3 Percentage of writing errors in sentential level from 26 English abstracts written by veterinary students in northeast Thailand. Frag = fragment, RO = run-on, SVA = subject-verb agreement, WO = word order, Ten = tense, Cap = capital letter, and Punct = punctuation.

Error analysis in word level

Based on the analyses, the students made errors in word level with articles, preposition, word choice, and noun. However, an error of number was not observed. Figure 3 and 4 demonstrate

frequency and percentage of writing errors in word level, respectively, found from English abstracts of the students. In addition, the topmost error in word level was word choice, whereas the lowest one was number.

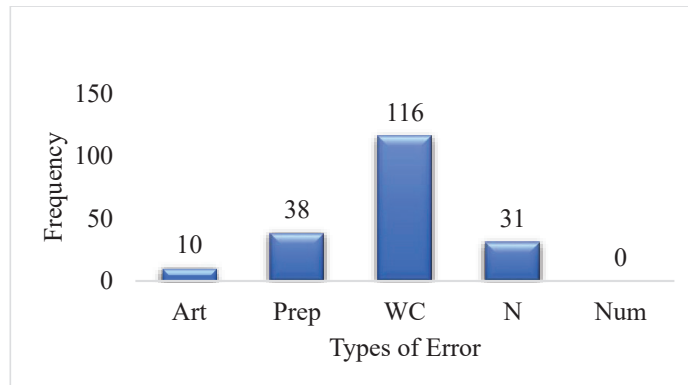


Figure 4 Frequency distribution of writing errors in word level from 26 English abstracts written by veterinary students in Northeast Thailand. Art = article, Prep = preposition, WC = word choice, N = noun, and Num = number.

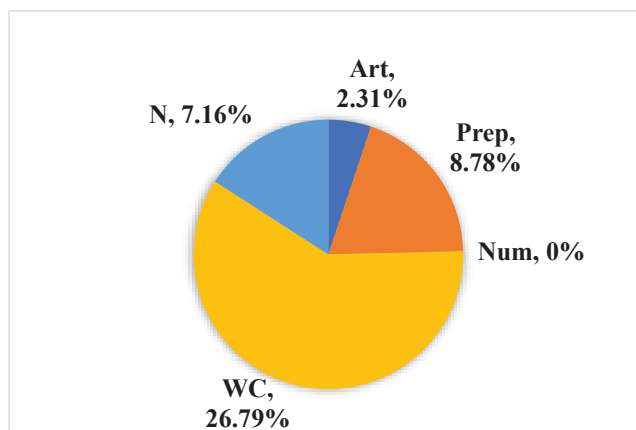


Figure 5 Percentage of writing errors in word level from 26 English abstracts written by veterinary students in Northeast Thailand. Art = article, Prep = preposition, WC = word choice, N = noun, and Num = number.

Discussion

The present study investigated writing errors in English abstracts of veterinary students in northeast Thailand. All of the abstracts were produced appropriately according to the course instruction and submitted online. In general, scientific abstracts should be composed of objective, methodology, results, and

conclusion (Cuschieri, Grech, & Savona-Ventura, 2019). However, the composition of abstracts in the present study was different since it was an abstract of review articles; it was deprived of methodology section. Considering the length of abstract, the current study demonstrated that the veterinary students in the “Clinical Seminar” course wrote their abstracts

approximately 160 words. This corresponded with the present study indicating that academic abstracts should be written up with approximately 150 words; it could be ranging from 150 to 200 words, depending on journals (Fletcher, 1988). However, the shorter or longer abstracts might affect its quality. One of the abstracts from students in the current study was written with only 97 words. This might affect the completeness of the abstract to convey core contents of the paper. On the other hand, a very long abstract might not be so fascinating that the readers continued reading that paper to the last page (Dewan & Gupta, 2016). In the present study, writing errors both in sentential and word levels were observed from English abstracts of the students.

In sentential level, capital letter was the most common error type of the students, accounting for approximately 20%. Correspondingly, previous studies indicated that the use of capital letter was the biggest error in writing of many countries, such as in Saudi Arabia demonstrated that ESL/ EFL learners in a scientific college produced a large number of wrong capital letters in their homework and examinations (Alamin & Ahmed, 2012). Likewise, the study in the Philippines also reported that capitalization was the most prominent error in sentential level from essays written by Filipino ESL writers (Gustilo & Magno, 2012). In Thailand, a former study indicated that one of the possible reasons for conducting errors with capital letter of Thai ESL/ EFL learners was due to the fact that capital letter

does not exist in Thai language system. As a result, they were not familiar with capitalization and made their writings erroneous (Runkati, 2013). An example of sentences with capital letter error is demonstrated below.

“Currently, Anticoccidials have been used for coccidiosis control so far. Due to uses of Anticoccidials, it causes widespread of anticoccidial resistance which make Unsuccessful treatment.”

The capitalization was found with two words which were “Anticoccidials” and “Unsuccessful.” According to Butler (2007), capitalization was performed in five major cases, including pronoun “I,” initial letter of the sentence, people’s name and title, nationality and language, and place. For this reason, the words “anticoccidials” and “unsuccessful” should not be capitalized. Moreover, the sentence should be rectified for other errors and rewritten as follows.

“Currently, anticoccidials have been used for coccidiosis control. Due to the use of anticoccidials, it caused widespread anticoccidial resistance which contributed to unsuccessful treatment.”

In word level, the most outstanding error was word choice. As for word choice error, it resulted in the deviation of sentence meaning due to the improper word (Phuket & Othman, 2015). A former study conducted an error analysis in the Philippines by categorizing Filipino EFL learners on the basis of writing proficiency into low, medium, and high and revealed that word choice error occupied the highest percentage from all proficiency groups

(Gustilo & Magno, 2012). In Thailand, a previous study indicated that word choice possessed the highest frequency of grammatical error in word level found in narrative writing of the university students who accomplished several English writing-related courses (Watcharapunyawong & Usaha, 2013). Based on the present study, an example from veterinary student's abstract demonstrating word choice errors is below.

"Recent studied have been shown that ruminitis is a majority cause of systemic inflammation by induced a nuclear factor (NF)-KB pathway."

The writer made an error by writing the word "majority" in front of the word "cause." From an interview, he or she perceived that noun could come after copula "be." Moreover, two nouns could be adjacent to each other as a compound noun. Thereafter, he or she translated from Thai to English in the writing. In this case, the major noun "cause" required an adjective, this sentence should be rewritten as follows.

"Recent studied have shown that ruminitis is a major cause of systemic inflammation by inducing a nuclear factor (NF)-KB pathway."

Conclusion

The current study investigating writing errors in sentential and word levels from English abstracts written by veterinary students in northeast Thailand. Based on sentential level, the most common errors from their abstracts included capital letter,

punctuation, and subject-verb agreement, respectively. According to word level, the topmost errors in their abstracts were word choice, preposition, and noun, respectively. It could be concluded that an inadequacy of linguistic knowledge, especially in terms of syntax and semantics, was the major reason of their writing errors.

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