

Research Article

AN ANALYSIS OF EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS TOWARDS FUNDAMENTAL ENGLISH WRITING LEARNING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CLASSES CONDUCTED BY NATIVE ENGLISH INSTRUCTORS AND THAI TEACHERS IN A THAI CLASSROOM CONTEXT

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Abstract

In order to study the successful strategy of efficient fundamental English writing teaching and learning for undergraduate level in educational institutions in Thailand, this paper, “An analysis of EFL students' perceptions and motivations towards fundamental English writing learning: A comparative study of classes conducted by native English instructors and Thai teachers in a Thai classroom context”, aims to shed light on how EFL undergraduate students perceive their own motivations in taking English writing course together with benefits offered by the course. In addition, this study also investigates problems and barriers that might affect students' learning performance. Finally, the study examines the learners' perceptions in studying their fundamental English writing course with their native English instructors and the Thai English teachers. A set of open-ended questions was the key research instrument designed to investigate participants' motivations and perceptions towards their experience in the writing learning class. The stage of data analysis and interpretation involves transforming qualitative themes or codes into quantitative numbers and interpreting in an “interpretation” section of the study. The findings suggest that students enrolled in the fundamental English writing course with various motivations namely, practicing and improving their writing skill, a chance to get a better grade, benefits offered to their real life and having ability to write correct English. The benefits the students

perceived they would get in taking the writing course were improving their writing skill while learning more words and word choices from peers and teachers' feedback activity. With regard to problems and barriers found in classroom learning, students possess inadequate English grammar and structure proficiency, limited vocabulary and word choices, weak organization and ideas as well as message transformation. Finally, the study concludes that the Thai learners were comfortable to study with the Thai instructors in the area of fundamental English writing with a significant supporting reason of no language barriers.

Keywords: Fundamental English Writing, English Writing Motivations, English Writing Perceptions, English Writing Barriers, English Writing in Thai Context

Introduction

This study investigated how Thai students who are not English major students from various faculties of a university in Thailand perceived fundamental English writing teaching and learning in the classes conducted by native English instructors and in classes taught by Thai teachers. Additionally, this research explored EFL students' motivations in promoting satisfactory English writing performance.

Due to the fact that English communication, including writing proficiency, is essential in today's world, Thai graduates are expected to be equipped with English writing skills in relevance to the nation's educational policy (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017, pp. 27-44). Several fundamental English writing courses are offered to students. Lecturers, both Thai and native English speakers, are assigned to teach those courses. The need to closely investigate students' perceptions towards their classroom learning with native English speakers and the Thai instructors as well as the students' learning motivations is worth taking into consideration. To respond to their perceptions and motivations that emerged from this study would call for identifiable appropriate learning and teaching strategies that efficiently promote students' English writing proficiency.

Even though fundamental English writing is considered an essential foundation of English writing course for EFL learners in Thailand, there is a considerable number of Thai students who fail to achieve the desired proficiency. Language and cultural variations may interrupt their second language (L2) writing (Sağlamel & Kayaoğlu, 2015, pp. 37-52). It might be an aspect that EFL students are still attached to their first language norms. There is much research suggesting that different sources (i.e., teacher feedback, peer feedback) and types (e.g., overemphasis on form, positive and negative

comments) of feedback may affect learners' motivations in the writing classroom.

Though the learning materials and activities in a writing classroom have the same focus, a question might be raised as to whether there are advantages and disadvantages in an English writing class conducted by native English teachers compared to an English writing class taught by Thai teachers. An interesting point is that cultural and language differences between their first language (L1) and the second language (L2) create difficulties for EFL learners to achieve their writing goals due to the fact that EFL students use their identity and their way of making meaning when they write in L2. Though the addressed writing problem does not directly involve the teachers, the emerged phenomenon from the previous research with regard to English writing aspects could be used as a guideline for this study.

There were three research objectives and questions raised to analyze the phenomenon of teaching and learning fundamental English writing in a Thai classroom context. The first objective of this study was to explore motivations of the EFL students with regard to taking fundamental English writing class. Secondly, the paper examined the emerged problems and barriers perceived by the learners which indicated that those barriers might negatively affect learners' writing performance. Finally, the EFL students' perceptions towards their writing class conducted by either the native English speaking teachers or the Thai instructors were explored. The emerged outcomes would be able to be used as a guideline for educational institutions to redesign their learning and teaching plans of English writing courses. Added to that, it would be a fundamental base for establishing future research.

Literature Review

Perception and motivation play a vital role in promoting EFL students' learning and achieving goals. The first review focuses on conceptualizing perception by reviewing existing literature from various scholars in the area (e.g. Hewstone et al., 1983; Weiner, 1985, pp. 548-573; Weiner, 2010, pp. 28-36). The review includes students' perception towards language learning (e.g. Warden & Lin, 2000, pp. 535-545; Ngo et al., 2017, pp. 188-202) and English writing (e.g. Petric, 2002, pp. 9-27; Schoonen et al., 2009). Secondly, scholarly literature about motivation are reviewed (e.g. Gardner, 2006; Astaman, 2009). General learning motivation frameworks from various scholars (e.g. Weiner, 1985, pp. 548-573; Hedricks, 1997; Seifert, 2004, pp. 137- 149; Weiner, 2010, pp. 28-36) and motivation in learning a second language, English in particular (e.g. McLeod, 1987, pp. 426-35; Cavalcanti & Cohen, 1990, pp. 155-177; Ferris, 1995, pp. 33-53; Straub, 1997, pp. 91-119), were examined. Thirdly, English

as a second or international language learning situations in various parts of the world were reviewed (e.g. Bradford, 2007, pp. 302-323; Astaman, 2009; Ngo et al., 2017, pp. 188-202). Finally, a review of literature in English learning circumstances in Thailand was included to explore the current situations or phenomena of EFL students' learning environments.

Concerning motivations in English writing learning, generally, in EFL classroom, when students were asked to describe the most difficult parts of writing, the responses of students confirmed many aspects that are commonly heard: frustrating and overwhelming (Zumbrunn et al., 2016, pp. 349-370). The process of writing can be cognitively challenging for even experienced writers. Many ELF learners struggle with writing tasks as a result of lack of knowledge; ineffective methods; lack of planning, content generation, revisions, and transcription; low persistence; and unrealistic self-efficacy (Santangelo et al., 2007, pp. 1-20). Therefore, English writing instructors play crucial roles in mediating the students' motivation and their satisfactory demonstration.

With regard to perceptions towards language learning, there have been many studies and considerations concerning the point whether native speakers of English or non-native speakers of English are better when it comes to teaching English (e.g. Benke & Medgyes, 2005, pp. 195-215; Brown, 2013; Baş & Gezeğin, 2015, pp. 317-324; Novianti, 2018, pp. 44-57). Some studies have come to the conclusion that both native speakers and non-native speakers have their advantages or disadvantages but there is no clear-cut answer for it (Ngo et al., 2017, pp. 188-202), particularly in the field of writing. No matter what background the teacher possesses, as a teaching professional, they utilize their ability to perform their teaching role as best as they possibly can. Even though teachers may believe that they have done their best in classroom teaching, it does not mean they can satisfy all the needs or expectations of the learners. Hence, the learners' perceptions and motivations towards their own learning are worth investigating

One of the key examined points of this study was to explore the hypothesis as to whether the Thai EFL undergraduate learners are able to determine whether native or non-native instructors best cater to their better understanding and promote their satisfactory English writing outcomes. Finally, according to Hofstede (1986, pp. 301-320), to support the significance of the perception, he argues that pre-conceptions can influence students' beliefs about their learning, and potentially the quality of the learning of English that occurs.

Regarding this discussed issue, the study by Ngo et al., (2017, pp. 188-202) suggests that the non-English major students in Vietnam, aiming to get good English exam results or to prepare

themselves for future professions and (my personal viewpoint) for further study, valued English learning as an important responsibility for the students to possess. This study's findings contrast with Warden and Lin (2000, pp. 535–545). They argue by highlighting that many Asian non-English major learners are studying English simply because English is mandatory. Nevertheless, under the different contexts and findings of much research in this field, it is worth adding this issue for consideration by exploring this phenomenon in the Thai context.

As a matter of fact, the pedagogical aspects of writing have been the focus of the writing field for many years, (Schoonen et al., 2009). On the other hand, cognitive-oriented research in writing has been sparse and with limitations. Added to the aforementioned points, Petric (2002, pp. 9-27) claims that it is evidence that students' perceptions towards writing in a second or foreign language is under-researched. Therefore, the need to include learners' perspectives towards writing in a second language is worth examining. Besides, according to Ortega (2009), ELF students tend to demonstrate a lower level of proficiency and less fully developed competencies in English writing. Therefore, English writing instructors can play a crucial role in promoting EFL learners' writing ability.

Consequently, to be able to perform well in learning English, motivation towards English is important. It is due to the fact that motivation is one of the reasons behind one's action or behavior. Gardner (2006) argues that students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels. He explains further that if someone is motivated, he or she tends to show the desire to enjoy the learning activities and achieve their goal at the ending stage. Therefore, under the fundamental English writing context in a Thai university, various factors in the classroom might be the medium in driving EFL students' satisfactory writing demonstration. Hence, the class instructor is considered one of the factors that plays an important role.

Research Methodology

This part of the study begins with an overview and justification for the research approach selected to investigate the perceptions and motivations of the EFL students towards fundamental English writing class. This study provides an empirical explanation and an analysis of the research. The analysis delivers various explanations to describe the outcomes of perceptions and motivations possessed by the EFL learners. The research technique and procedure of the qualitative approach satisfied the researcher's need to clarify the extent of retrieved data in a single study. The qualitative data was employed in this study to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problems. The data were collected from the participants and their stakeholders and then the information was

integrated to provide an interpretation of the overall results.

The priority of research type in this study is qualitative, which is emphasized first as this is the primary interest: (1) What were the motivations of the ELF learners in taking the fundamental English writing class? (2) What were the aspects affecting their learning performance? And, (3) What were the EFL students' perceptions towards learning English writing with English native speaking instructors and the Thai teachers?

The stage of data analysis and interpretation involved transforming qualitative themes or codes into quantitative numbers and interpreting them. Finally, from a theoretical perspective, the guidelines used for this research were the integrated frameworks of Weiner (1985, pp. 548-573) and Gardner (2006).

The geographical context for this study is a university in Bangkok. The selected institution features various faculties where their students are required to pass four English foundation courses with "Fundamental English Writing" being one of them in order to obtain their Bachelor Degree. With regard to respondents and their profiles, the main participants were 130 students (N=130) from various faculties, randomly selected from four fundamental English writing classes regardless of their year levels, genders, and areas of study. However, in order to enroll in this course, students have to complete their prerequisite courses of English Foundation 2 and 3. Among the 130 respondents, half of them were from writing classes conducted by native English instructors and the other half were from classes conducted by the Thai teachers. This study chose a diverse group of respondents with a relatively large sample size in order to cope with some students who may produce biased responses. The students' responses could confirm this paper's reliability. This paper aimed at establishing the reliability of the questionnaire by estimating the consistency of responses of all the participants; that is to say, similar questions led to similar responses.

Aiming at triangulating the data, the eight English writing instructors – four native English speakers and four Thai lecturers – were asked to answer the different set of open-ended questionnaires seeking additional explanation to support the findings drawn from the key participants.

Research Instruments

A set of open-ended questions was the research instrument employed in this study. The set of questions was distributed to the main participants. All items within the questionnaires were written in Thai and validated by three Thai magazine editors in order for participants to completely understand the questions without experiencing any language barriers. Besides, each question item was

reviewed by the four English writing course instructors – two native English speakers and two Thai instructors through the Index of Congruence (IOC) analysis suggested in Srisathidnarakul (2010). This was to check for the reliability of each statement in each part of the questionnaire. The set of questionnaires comprises two main parts. The first part seeks participants' demographic information. The second part consists of six question items designed to investigate participants' motivations and perceptions towards their experience in the writing learning class as listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Objectives of the questionnaire and designed questions for the main participants

| No. | Objectives of investigated aspect | Questions |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | Students' motivations | According to your own perception, what are the motivations or factors that make you pay attention to studying the "Fundamental English Writing" course? Why do you decide to take the "Fundamental English Writing" course? |
| 2 | Problems and barriers | According to your own perception, what are the problems and barriers in studying the "Fundamental English Writing" course? |
| 3 | Perceptions towards instructors | According to your own perception, who do you prefer to study the "Fundamental English Writing" course with and why? |
| 4 | Perception towards benefits from taking the course | According to your own perception, what are the benefits from taking the "Fundamental English Writing" course? |
| 5 | Additional perceptions | Your additional comments or suggestions |

Aiming to investigate the stakeholders' perceptions towards English writing class teaching, a set of questions was designed to obtain some ideas from the instructors as illustrated in the table below.

Table 2: Questions for stakeholders

| No. | Questions |
|-----|--|
| 1 | In your opinion, what are the reasons why non-English major students take the Fundamental English Writing course? |
| 2 | In your opinion, what are key factors or motivations that can contribute to a successful learning outcome of the EFL students who take the Fundamental English Writing course? |
| 3 | In your opinion, what are the benefits that students can gain from taking the Fundamental English Writing course? |
| 4 | In your opinion, what are possible problems or barriers for the EFL students when learning Fundamental English Writing? |
| 5 | What are your strategies or techniques that can improve writing ability of the EFL learners in Thailand? |
| 6 | Additional opinion |

As the qualitative model is the methodology for this research, the strategies of data analysis consist of firstly analyzing the qualitative data. The qualitative self-perception and motivation of the EFL learners was conducted. This was the way to attain solid quantitative results as suggested by Creswell (2009), involving completing all the necessary data transformation, including qualitatively creating codes and themes.

In addition, a series of steps were implemented to check the validity of data derived from the findings. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) claim that validity relates to research design and data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of findings. Consequently, the validity and reliability of the data outcome drawn from both groups of participants, students and instructors were thoroughly checked throughout each working approach (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

In data collection, the sample size of EFL students - the two writing classes taught by the native English instructors and another two classes taught by the non-native English lecturers was investigated. In terms of data analysis, the major themes that emerged in the qualitative findings were grouped, coded and reviewed for further interpretation and integration. Furthermore, peer checking and detailed description approaches were applied to all emerged findings in order to ascertain accuracy of data. Finally, the potential threats in internal validity were also noted and controlled during the data analysis procedures.

For the final stage of integration and interpretation, the interpretation procedures were applied to interpret the data from the qualitative findings obtained from the primary group of EFL students and interpreted for a holistic picture of the findings.

Findings and Discussion

The aim of this research was to investigate the perceptions and motivations of EFL undergraduate students towards their fundamental English writing class. Specifically, this study explored the following three key research questions:

1. What were the general perceptions and motivations of the ELF learners in taking the fundamental English writing class?
2. What were the problems or barriers that could affect their learning performance?
3. What were EFL students' perceptions towards learning English writing with native English instructors and the Thai teachers?

The result data presented in this chapter answered the above research questions. The findings included qualitative results drawn from the participants' self-reflection and additional ideas from the stakeholders on the distributed questionnaires. The data presented included discussions and reflections on the significant findings that emerged. The outline of findings was organized by firstly displaying the findings from the study, gained from selected data collection procedures, and included a detailed analysis. Next, the data were analyzed and discussed. Finally, the conclusion or the summary of the findings and discussions were presented to answer each research question. Therefore, the findings and discussions of this study were lined up from answering the first research question to the final question as presented below.

What were the general perceptions and motivations of the ELF learners in taking the fundamental English writing class?

The perceptions and motivations of the ELF learners in taking the fundamental English writing class are reported in Table 3. In this section, respondents were asked to deal with the question "What are the motivations or factors that make you pay more attention to studying the fundamental English writing course? After grouping the participants' answers, there were seven motivations found why they took the English writing course.

Table 3: Students' motivations in taking English writing course

| Question | Motivations in taking English writing course | Percentage |
|---|--|------------|
| What are the motivations or factors that make you pay attention to studying the "Fundamental English Writing" course? | To practice and improve their writing skill | 43.84% |
| | To learn English writing with a good English writing instructor | 29.23% |
| | To enroll in the course as a mandatory subject that all students have to pass before they graduate | 20% |
| | To have ability in writing sentences and paragraphs | 19.23% |
| | To get some knowledge and apply it in their real life situations | 17.69% |
| | To enroll with the hope that they could get a good grade | 16.92% |
| | To avoid doing group work or to fit with their available schedules | 9.23% |

The majority of students (43.84%) viewed that their motivation in taking the writing course was to practice and improve their writing skill for applying it in their daily life and at their future workplace. This students' perception was relevant to their instructors (62.5%), that most students took this course because they wanted to prepare themselves for their future career. This emerged result was similar to research conducted in other regions like in Vietnam, Taiwan and Turkey, for example. Students were mostly extrinsically motivated in order to gain benefits in their future careers such as good position and salaries (Warden & Lin, 2000, pp. 535–545; Bradford, 2007, pp. 302-323; Köseoğlu, 2013, pp. 800–806; Ngo et al., 2017, pp. 188-202).

Most Thai students perceived that knowing English is beneficial for future work due to the globalized world today. According to the statistics revealed by one of the leading recruiting agents, JobThai.com (Salary information, 2019), there were 197,862 positions available in July to September of that year and 43,235 positions (21.85%) emphasized that applicants need to have foreign language skill. Significantly, there were 36,506 (84.4%) openings specifying that English was compulsory and offered relatively higher salaries.

While 29.23% of students claimed that their motivation was to learn English writing with a good English writing instructor, they supported that English writing teachers are kind and pay more attention to students individually by giving examples and feedback and having students practice. Students would feel motivated or demotivated after having learned English with their teacher for a certain period of time (Weiner, 2010, pp. 28–36). Teachers played the key role in creating a satisfying, relaxing and motivating atmosphere of English writing class depending on their teaching styles and strategies to fit with a particular group of learners.

Thirdly, 20% of the respondents claimed that their motivation to enroll in the course was because it is a mandatory course that all students have to pass before they graduate. This phenomenon was similar to the practice in many countries in Asia that most non-major students study English as it is a mandatory course (Warden & Lin, 2000, pp. 535–545). Some of the students (19.23%) took this writing course with an aim to have ability in writing sentences and paragraphs. They perceived that they would have opportunities to practice writing either in the classroom or do it as homework. Among two other groups of students which were nearly the same percentage (17.69%) and (16.92%), the first group of students perceived that by taking this course, they could get some knowledge and apply it in their real life situations. On the other hand, the motivation of the second group of students was to enroll with the hope that they could get a good grade. They viewed that the fundamental writing course was the easiest English compulsory course. As result, they could get a better grade and that could lift up their GPA. Last but not least, there were some respondents (9.23%) who had different motivations. Some of them enrolled in the course just to avoid doing group work while some of them took the course because the timing fit in the available schedules offered by the university. Furthermore, there were other students who believed that by taking this course, they did not have to face listening and speaking assignments.

In conclusion and responding to the first research question, there were various motivations that EFL undergraduate students possessed which were driven by various factors. They intended to enroll in the fundamental English writing course with significant motivations namely, practicing and improving their writing skill for a better future job and benefits offered in their real life, studying with their favorite instructors, a chance to get a better grade, the course being compulsory, acquiring the ability to write correct English, and so forth.

What were problems or barriers that could affect their learning performance?

In examining problems and barriers found among the students who took the “Fundamental English Writing” course, the perceptions of the respondents were displayed in the same direction as illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Problems and barriers in English writing perceived by students

| Question | Problems and Barriers | Percentage |
|--|---|------------|
| What are the problems and barriers in studying the "Fundamental English Writing" course? | Inadequate grammar and vocabulary proficiency | 100% |
| | Limitation in organizing or arranging their ideas into a good and solid paragraph | 18.46% |
| | Limitation in possessing the second language (L2) vocabulary | 16.92% |
| | Being unconfident to think about and answer the instructor's questions | 6.15% |
| | Big class size | 4.61% |

All respondents (100%) pointed out that the key problems for them were “grammar and structure” aspects and “vocabulary and word choices”. For the grammar and structure point, the learners perceived that they have inadequate grammar proficiency in the areas of tense usage, structure, conjunctions, subject-verb agreement, for example.

The students' perception of possessing inadequate grammar and structure knowledge was in relation to the opinions suggested by the course instructors, both native English and Thai teachers. The majority of the instructors (87.5%) viewed that many students do not understand the basic grammar and basic knowledge of English, including having inadequate vocabulary. There was a question raised how this phenomenon could occur as students who took this course needed to take two or three pre-requisite English courses before taking this writing course. Besides, according to the English learning situation in Thailand, English learning has been included as a compulsory subject since the very young age of students. For several decades, English in Thailand has been widely perceived as the main international working language with outsiders for various purposes, for instance economic, political, academic, and cultural reasons (Rappa & Wee, 2006; Baker, 2012, pp. 18-27). With regard to these two phenomena, it was worth investigating for future research concerning a classroom's English learning and teaching in a Thai context with the question why many Thai

students possessing a long period of English learning were still with insufficient basic English knowledge to pursue English language courses in a higher educational level.

Additionally, all respondents (100%) viewed that the major obstacle that obstructed them from learning English writing was their inadequate vocabulary bank which plays a vital part in writing. No matter how many ideas the learners possessed while they were taking the writing course, they could not produce their written materials well enough because of their vocabulary and word choices limitations. This phenomenon was correlated to some barriers found in some students (16.92%). They pointed out that even though they had some good ideas in their head in their first language (L1), they were not able to deliver those particular good ideas in their writing. This was because of their limitation in possessing the second language (L2) vocabulary. Adding to their scanty idea organizing skills, students felt that they normally thought in Thai and input that thought into English writing. According to the writing instructors, thinking in Thai and writing using direct translation in their writing tasks caused meaning distraction at a paragraph level. Students tend to produce writing affected by their rhetorical and cultural writing patterns in their native language (Kaplan, 1987, pp. 9-21). The teachers were encouraged to explore strategies to deal with this phenomenon by looking at a plethora of research in second language writing that is available.

Concerning inadequate vocabulary possessed by the students, the stakeholders also added that in several classrooms, it was noticeable that many English writing course students could not produce or write accurate English at a sentence level. They pointed out that with the aforementioned situation the students experienced, they struggled harder at the paragraph writing level. Consequently, in my point of view, before promoting students to a writing course, students should have passed some other English courses that emphasized basic grammar and sentence writing more. This might help students to struggle less in the writing class and quickly enhance their English ability.

In addition, organization and ideas for writing were two more barriers for the learners to achieve success in their writing course, which were similar to the ideas drawn from their instructors. Of the student respondents, 18.46% viewed that they did not know how to organize or arrange their ideas into a good and solid paragraph. In my perspective as an English writing teacher, exposing students repeatedly to paragraph writing components might be an answer for this problem. Next, there were two more barriers found among the learners. The learners were not confident to think about and answer the instructor's questions because they were afraid that their answers might be

wrong (6.15%). This point was explored more in the answer of the next research question. Finally, the size of the class also mattered and became an obstacle for learners. Of the students' voices disclosing class size, 4.61% stated around 40-50 students was considered too big. As a result, the instructor could not have more time or attention – providing individual feedback – for their students. Not only the voices from the learners with regard to the size of the class that effected their learning performance, the instructors also claimed that the larger the size of the classroom, the lesser the time the teacher could provide to the students. For example, in a 3-hour writing class of 30-35 students, after an in-class practice or assignment, the teacher would have only less than two minutes to give individual students feedback, which was considered a crucial activity for writing class.

Finally, there was one emerged and interesting result extrapolated from the instructors. It suggested that being absent from the class was also a key factor that affected students' learning performance. Basically, the writing course required full attendance and participation from the learners. Practicing in and outside classroom together with individual feedback was vital for this course. Long holidays in Thailand and students' personal absences often created long breaks between lessons.

In conclusion, there were various problems and barriers found and they directly and indirectly affected the learning performance of the students who took the "Fundamental Writing" course. The major problems found were inadequate knowledge of grammar and structure, vocabulary and word choice limitation, weak organization and ideas, messages transformation – Thai into English, self-confidence, and the relatively big class size.

What were the EFL students' perceptions towards learning English writing with native English instructors and the Thai teachers?

Even though there was no consensus on the point whether the native speakers of English or the non-native speakers of English are better when it comes to teaching English (Ngo et al., 2017, pp. 188-202), it was worth exploring under the Thai teaching and learning context to see whether the outcomes would be similar. The findings gained from the students' perceptions are reported in Table 5.

Table 5: Students' perceptions towards learning English writing with instructors

| Question | Perceptions towards instructors | Percentage |
|---|---|------------|
| Who do you prefer to study the "Fundamental English Writing" course with and why? | Prefer to learn their English writing course with the Thai teachers. | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thai instructors could make their communication or interaction better comparing to the foreign instructors | 83.07% |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thai instructors tended to understand more how and the way Thai students think as well as the learning nature of the students | 21.53% |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The learners felt more relaxed when studying with Thai instructors due to the fact that there was no language barrier. | 12.30% |
| | Be comfortable with both native English instructors and Thai lecturers | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers used the same learning and teaching materials | 12.30% |
| | Prefer to learn their English writing course with the native English teachers | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They could learn other English language skills at the same time. | 4.61% |

With regard to the perception drawn from the respondents, it suggested that almost all the non-major students who were studying at various faculties were comfortable about learning writing in their English writing course with the Thai English teachers (83.07%). The students disclosed their perspectives by ranking and identifying the reasons why they were comfortable with the Thai lecturers. Firstly, they perceived that learning with Thai instructors could make their communication or interaction better comparing to the foreign instructors. They asserted that they could enhance their communication by understanding the interactive messages clearer between the teacher and the students, resulting in enhancing students' writing performance. This is due to results inferred from several research suggesting that the quality of teacher's communicative feedback has a strong impact on L2 students' reactions to their writing since the L2 writer appreciate clear, concerted, specific and efficient feedback (Cavalcanti & Cohen, 1990, pp. 155-177; Ferris, 1995, pp. 33-53; Straub, 1997,

pp. 91-119). The Thai EFL learners perceived that explanations from the Thai instructors could make them understand words usage, structures, writing principles, and so forth. To this point, there was no language barrier among all the parties involved.

The result inferred from the students was relevant to some native English instructors' point of view. The majority viewed that many students do not understand lessons taught in English. They lack the language skills to understand teachers when English is used as the language of instruction. Adding to that, the foreign instructors viewed that many students possessed inadequate English skills in listening, taking notes and completing tasks on time. However, the native English instructors offered alternative strategies to compensate for the language barrier by providing clear examples and made the class fun and motivating with activities. However, those offered strategies could satisfy only 4.61% of students who perceived that, learning with foreign teachers, they could learn other English language skills at the same time.

Furthermore, some respondents (21.53%) revealed the reason why they felt more comfortable with the Thai teachers. Empathy and understanding were the factors that played the vital role in the classroom learning. Students perceived that Thai instructors tended to understand more how and the way Thai students think as well as the learning nature of the students. The learners' perception was similar to the teachers' opinion on empathy. The non-native English speaking teachers in Turkey state "the non-native English instructors have gone through the same procedure of learning English as a foreign language, they tend to understand their EFL students better" (Baş & Gezegin, 2015, pp. 317–324). Adding to the aforementioned point, some participants (12.30%) viewed that learning with Thai instructors created a more relaxing atmosphere in the classroom. The learners felt more relaxed when studying with Thai instructors due to the fact that there was no language barrier. They could comfortably take turns in asking and answering questions.

However, there were some perspectives suggesting that the students were comfortable with lessons taught by either native English instructors or Thai lecturers (12.30%). The participants perceived that both native and Thai instructors could deliver the same things to the learners as the teachers used the same learning and teaching materials. However, it was important to note that some of the respondents preferred to take courses with the non-Thai lecturers but in areas such as listening and speaking courses. Nevertheless, with an issue of determining the best English teacher for EFL students, there were several research conducted in different places of EFL classroom contexts

such as in Sweden (Brown, 2013), Turkey (Baş & Gezeğin, 2015, pp. 317–324) and Indonesia (Novianti, 2018, pp. 44-57) both native and non-native English instructors can succeed as a qualified English teacher with some advantages and disadvantages of both sides (Benke & Medgyes, 2005). Therefore, the teachers are required to handle the problems encountered by EFL students in their classroom.

To summarize and answer the final research question, Thai learners were comfortable studying with the Thai instructors in the area of fundamental English writing with the significant supporting reason of no language barriers. As the course is a foundation course, the students expected responsive feedback in the class. Therefore, without the communication problem, they perceived that their learning would progress smoothly.

All in all, the findings deduced from the participants showed and concluded that there were various factors that played in improving students' English writing learning. However, there was still a question raised whether students' internal factors or attributes also affected their learning performance. Several further research issues were identified and worth investigating to answer the emerged hypotheses.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to analyze and investigate EFL students' perceptions and motivations towards their fundamental English writing class. This research also explored the problems and barriers that might occur to prevent students from maximizing their learning performance. Added into this study was examining the respondents' perception towards the instructors who conducted the writing class.

EFL students' perceptions and motivations were crucial in promoting their own positive English writing performance. Being equipped with fundamental English writing abilities, the EFL graduates were confident to continue their higher education or deliver better performance at multinational workplaces or in any international encounters. Moreover, the study's findings with analytical information would also benefit English writing teaching plans along with allocation of teaching professionals of the related authority based on the EFL students' perceptions and motivations which are considered the best predictors of students' academic achievement (Hedricks, 1997). With all the mentioned benefits, the appropriate teaching plans would maximize ELF students' English writing outcome, encouraging students to achieve their fundamental English writing learning goals.

The findings obtained from this study might be able to be used as a guideline in designing teaching and learning fundamental English writing courses under the context of Thai education. Generally speaking, there were several advantages and disadvantages in teaching English writing as second language for students by native English instructors and the Thai English teachers. (Ngo et al., 2017, pp. 188-202). However, under the Thai context and with the non-major students who were the participants of this study, the results yielded some noteworthy directions for university authorities to revisit the English teaching and learning plans. Although the outcomes of this study might not be able to absolutely confirm the teaching and learning phenomenon in the English writing classroom, the emerged findings derived from both groups of respondents could be an essential guideline. Further research is encouraged to be conducted in detail of each perspective under different contexts or participants in order to see different aspects that might significantly emerge.

Throughout the study, as a researcher, I was aware of the methodological impediments which could not be integrated or implemented into this study due to various constraints. Examples are final English writing grades of students from classes conducted by the native English and Thai instructors, participant selection process, educational policies, stakeholders, teaching and learning materials, and so forth. Therefore, I listed the possible methodological limitations in this study as follows.

First, the most significant limitation of this study concerned the findings relating to the question of learning preference with native English instructors or the Thai instructors. The respondents who answered the questionnaire might have both positive and negative biases towards their instructors. Secondly, a triangulated data collection such as in-depth interviews should have been conducted to see additional perspectives that could materialize during the interview sessions of both stakeholders – students and instructors. Although there were some limitations as mentioned and the results might not have been able to be generalized, this study could provide some indications and provide a basis for fundamental English writing teaching for non-English major students as well as for further research.

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