

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion in this chapter are presented in two sections. The first section reports and discusses the types and frequency of grammatical errors in all 30 students' FE I written assignments. The second section presents and discusses the types and frequency of common grammatical errors made by both students with high and low EEE scores in their written assignments.

4.1 Types and Frequency of Grammatical Errors Made by All 30 Students in FE I Written Assignments

Table 4.1 shows the types and frequency of grammatical errors all 30 students made in their FE I written assignments.

Table 4.1 A Summary of Types and Frequency of Grammatical Errors Made by All 30 Students in FE I Written Assignments

Types of errors	Number	Percent	Rank
1. Incomplete sentences	152	13.49	1
2. Run-on sentences	41	3.64	
3. Comparison	2	0.18	
4. Word order	8	0.71	
5. There-be	4	0.35	
6. Tenses	95	8.43	5
7. Voice	13	1.15	
8. Agreement	112	9.94	3
9. Infinitives	30	2.66	
10. Gerunds	18	1.60	
11. Nouns	119	10.56	2
12. Verbs	55	4.88	
13. Adverbs	11	0.98	
14. Adjectives	21	1.86	
15. Pronouns	35	3.11	
16. Modal/ Auxiliary	21	1.86	
17. Possessive ('s)	6	0.53	
18. Conjunctions	6	0.53	
19. Prepositions	68	6.03	
20. Articles*	92	8.16	6
21. Punctuation	72	6.39	
22. Capitalization	44	3.90	
23. Spelling*	102	9.05	4
TOTAL	1127	100.00	

Note: 1. * Types of grammatical errors found across four assignments made by the two groups of students with a high percentage.

2. See **Appendix G** for detailed findings.

The results presented in Table 4.1 indicate that 23 types of grammatical errors were produced by the students ranging from sentence to word level. It can be seen that six main types of errors occurred most frequently, namely errors in incomplete sentences, the use of nouns, agreement, spelling, tenses, and articles. Among these, errors in incomplete sentences were the most frequent type of errors that the students made (13.49%). This was followed by errors in nouns (10.56%), in agreement (9.94%), in spelling (9.05%) and in tenses (8.43%). The type of errors with the lowest frequency of occurrence was errors in articles (8.16%). It should be noted that errors in articles and spelling were consistently found in all four assignments of both groups and had a high frequency of occurrence (see Appendix G).

What the findings tell us is somewhat similar to what was found in the studies conducted on grammatical errors in Thai students' writing by Lush (2002), Srichai (2002), Abdulsata (1999), Srinon (1999), and Lukanavanich (1988). All of the studies found grammatical errors in articles and tenses. As for Srichai's and Abdulsata's studies, errors in incomplete structures, particularly fragments and run-ons were one of the most frequent types of errors that the students committed. The studies conducted by Lush, Abdulsata, and Srinon also found that errors in nouns, particularly misuse of singular and plural nouns, frequently occurred in essay writing. Moreover, all researchers, excluding Srichai, found that the students had great difficulty with subject-verb agreement.

The major plausible cause of error occurrence suggested by researchers is the differing characteristics of English and Thai. Brown (2000) and Boey (1975) also pointed out that L1 interference is the most noticeable source of errors among second language learners because the students use their L1 experience to facilitate the second language learning process.

In this study, making complete sentences was most problematic for the students as the highest number of errors was errors in incomplete sentences. This type of error could inhibit the comprehensibility of the written work since readers may not get the intended meanings of what the students wrote (Srichai, 2002). Errors in incomplete sentences were fragment and omission errors which accounted for a high percentage of the total number of errors, especially errors of omission. As found in their written assignments, fragments in 'but clause' and 'when clause' seemed much

more serious than other kinds of fragment errors. By comparison, omissions particularly of object pronouns and verbs appeared to be the most frequent sub-types among errors in omission. The fact that the students were unable to form complete and meaningful sentences might be due to their limited grammatical knowledge coupled with L1 interference which allows the omission of object pronouns in some instances.

As for errors in nouns, the percentage of errors was quite high. Most errors were misuse of singular for plural nouns. This is possibly because in Thai, as Lukanavanich (1988) points out, all nouns are designated as singular whether they are countable or non-countable. The students, hence, did not use correct forms of nouns when they used English. Moreover, the students' lack of knowledge of English plural forms would be another probable explanation. The students might not know that the addition of plural marker –s for plural nouns or a change of noun forms is required in English.

Furthermore, the difference between the students' L1, Thai, and English could be a major cause of errors in agreement, particularly errors in subject-verb agreement often found in their written assignments. The students in this study did not add third person singular –s endings. This is likely due to their incomplete application of rules or interference of Thai in which inflection of verbs with respect to their subjects is not required (Lukanavanich, 1988). Another reason could be that the students might have lacked awareness that third person singular pronouns always need the inflections of verbs.

Spelling was one of the most frequent types of errors committed by the students. As found in the students' written assignments, misspelling appeared in several forms. The most possible cause of such errors could be the students' carelessness. These errors also may have resulted from their mispronunciation. They might not pronounce the final sounds which are present in English but absent in Thai, as can be seen in the lack of the final sound 's' in '*sometimes*' and '*always*', for example. Moreover, misspelling might be caused by the students' lack of familiarity with the spelling rules.

Tenses in English also caused difficulties for Thai students. In the present study, errors in misuse of tenses were very frequent in the students' written

assignments, especially misuse of simple present tense for simple past tense in writing narratives. This is mainly because narrating in Thai does not require as many markers as in English which includes time markers in relation to the use of past tense. On the other hand, Thais only depend on time markers or adverbs of time in order to describe past events. When these adverbs are absent, it is difficult for the students to recognize past tense without clues. The students, therefore, automatically employ simple present tense. In addition, simple present tense is the first among English tenses that the students learned and its structure is simple for them. Since most students are able to master this tense, it is habitually used.

Similarly, articles could create problems for Thai students of English because there is no such analogue of the use of articles in Thai. In this study, the students frequently omitted indefinite articles 'a, an' although the use of articles, both definite and indefinite, has been taught in language classrooms. As Srichai (2002) states, it seems that the students were not aware that an indefinite article is obligatory in English while in Thai, an article system does not exist. The students' avoidance strategy would also be one of the causes that led to omission of articles frequently found.

It should be noted here that this section presents an overall picture of the findings of types and frequency of grammatical errors found in all the students' written assignments i.e. the findings in this section include errors made by all the subjects in the study without regard to proficiency level. The next section will present the findings and discussion of types and frequency of grammatical errors that the students in each group had in common and will include examples of those errors.

4.2 Types and Frequency of Common Grammatical Errors Made by Students with High and Low EEE Scores in FE I Written Assignments

Table 4.2 shows the types and frequency of grammatical errors students with high and low EEE scores had in common in their FE I written assignments.

Table 4.2 A Summary of Types and Frequency of Common Grammatical Errors Made by Students with High and Low EEE Scores in FE I Written Assignments

Types of errors	HE		Rank	LE		Rank	Total Number	Percent
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent			
1. Incomplete sentences	54	11.39	2	98	15.01	1	152	13.49
6. Tenses	44	9.28	5	51	7.81	5	95	8.43
8. Agreement	56	11.81	1	56	8.58	4	112	9.94
11. Nouns	52	10.97	3	67	10.26	2	119	10.56
20. Articles	45	9.49	4	47	7.20	6	92	8.16
23. Spelling	41	8.65	6	61	9.34	3	102	9.05
Total Number	474	100.00		653	100.00		1127	100.00
Percent	42.06			57.94			100.00	

Note: 1. The **total number** and **percent** shown in the last two lines of this table were based on the frequency of all the 23 types of errors in the study.
 2. **HE** = Students with high EEE scores, **LE** = Students with low EEE scores.
 3. See **Appendix G** for detailed findings.

As shown in Table 4.2, six types of grammatical errors were most frequently committed by each group of students in their FE I written assignments. The top six types of errors made by students with high EEE scores differed slightly from those of students with low EEE scores. That is, the type of grammatical errors with the highest frequency of occurrence made by students with high EEE scores in FE I written assignments was errors in agreement (11.81%). This was followed by errors in incomplete sentences (11.39%), errors in nouns (10.97%), errors in articles (9.49%), errors in tenses (9.28%), and errors in spelling (8.65%). The table indicates that students with high EEE scores made all six types of errors with a relatively similar frequency of occurrence.

In comparison, the type of grammatical errors made by students with low EEE scores in FE I written assignments which occurred most frequently was errors in incomplete sentences (15.01%). This was followed by errors in nouns (10.26%),

spelling (9.34%), agreement (8.58%), tenses (7.81%), and, lastly, articles (7.20%). The fact that students with low EEE scores committed the highest percentage of errors in incomplete sentences (15.01%) could be an indication that their knowledge of basic structure was not possibly sufficient so they had more difficulty in forming sentences than students with high EEE scores (11.39%). Another possibility could be that the content of assignments including grammatical points learned in the units might be so complicated that the students could not master them. In particular, the content of the third assignment could cause the most difficulty for the two groups of students as errors in incomplete sentences, including both omission and fragment errors, were found in their third assignments with the highest percentage (see Appendix G). This indicates that the assignment in the third unit which required students to write a note to a friend to borrow things by making direct and indirect requests with modals and *if* clauses might have mostly caused the students problems with structuring complex sentences (see Chapter 3 and Appendix C).

In this study, types of errors occurring in both groups' written assignments with the highest percentages of the total number of errors were regarded as common grammatical errors. In other words, grammatical errors that both students with high and low EEE scores had in common in their FE I written assignments fell into six categories: errors in incomplete sentences, errors in tenses, errors in agreement, errors in nouns, errors in articles, and errors in spelling. However, the two groups had different sub-types of errors. It is of interest to explore the nature of the types and sub-types of grammatical errors that each group of students made in their written assignments. The findings of the types and sub-types of common grammatical errors made by the two groups with the highest frequency of occurrence, namely errors in incomplete sentences, tenses, agreement, nouns, articles, and spelling, will be presented in this section. Examples of errors are also presented and discussed.

4.2.1 Errors in Incomplete Sentences

The first common type of grammatical errors includes two main sub-types: fragment and omission. The sub-types and frequency of errors in incomplete sentences are shown below:

Table 4.3 Sub-types and Frequency of Errors in Incomplete Sentences Made by Students with High and Low EEE Scores

1. Incomplete sentences	HE		LE	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1.1 Fragment				
1.1.1 But clause	8	14.81	7	7.41
1.1.2 Because clause	7	12.96	9	9.18
1.1.3 When/ While clause	1	1.85	14	14.29
1.1.4 If clause	-	-	2	2.04
1.1.5 Prepositional phrase	2	3.70	-	-
1.1.6 Others	7	12.96	3	3.06
Total	25	46.30	35	35.71
1.2 Omission				
1.2.1 Omission of nouns in subject position	4	7.41	1	1.02
1.2.2 Omission of nouns in object position	4	7.41	3	3.06
1.2.3 Omission of subject pronouns	5	9.26	9	9.18
1.2.4 Omission of object pronouns	8	14.81	17	17.35
1.2.5 Omission of relative pronouns as subject	-	-	-	-
1.2.6 Omission of verbs	8	14.81	30	30.61
1.2.7 Omission of conjunctions	-	-	3	3.06
Total	29	53.70	63	64.29
Grand total	54	100.00	98	100.00
Percentage of total errors (152)	35.53		64.47	

Note: See Appendix G for detailed findings.

Errors in incomplete sentences are interesting in that the percentage of the total number of errors made by students with high EEE scores (35.53%) is slightly more than half of those made by the other group (64.47%). This type of error consisted of two sub-types: fragment and omission. The total percentage of each sub-type reveals that fragment and omission errors made by both groups occurred in a reverse order of frequency. That is, for students with high EEE scores fragment errors accounted for a higher percentage of their total errors (46.30%) than they did for students with low EEE scores (35.71%) whereas students with low EEE scores had

more problems with errors in omission (64.29%) than their counterpart (53.70%). Comparing the two sub-types, fragments accounted for a lower percentage of total errors than did omissions in both groups. In this section, these two main sub-types of errors in incomplete sentences will be discussed in detail.

4.2.1.1 Errors in Fragment

As for fragment errors, it was found that students with high EEE scores made the highest number of errors in ‘but clause’ (14.81%), followed equally by ‘because clause’ (12.96%) and other fragments (12.96%). In contrast, students with low EEE scores had far more difficulty with ‘when/while clause’ (14.29%) than students with high EEE scores, followed by ‘because clause’ (9.18%) and ‘but clause’ (7.41%). It should be noted that errors in ‘when/while clause’ made by students with high EEE scores only accounted for 1.85% of the total number of errors in incomplete sentences whereas for students with low EEE scores, this sub-type of error accounted for 14.29% of the total. A large difference in frequency of occurrence between the two groups in ‘when clause’ embedded in ‘Clauses containing *it* with adverbial clauses’, which was one of the focal points in the first assignment of FE I, could be an indication that students with low EEE scores did not have sufficient prerequisite knowledge about sentence structure which involves how simple and complex sentences are formed and that they did not know the difference between main and subordinate clauses. An example of this type of error will be discussed in detail.

The following examples illustrate errors in fragments. The students’ grammatical errors are italicized and underlined, and reconstructions are given in normal typeset. In case the sentences selected contain other types of errors which are not the focus of the discussion, those errors will not be indicated or discussed but will be reconstructed. HE, at the end of the sentence, refers to students with high EEE scores and LE represents students with low EEE scores.

Fragment (But Clause):**Example 1**

Incorrect: *The most occupation is not freedom; you must follow a tradition of your career. But a freelance writer is not.* (HE)

Correct: People of most occupations do not have freedom; they must follow the practice of their careers but a freelance writer does not have to.

Fragment (When Clause):**Example 2**

Incorrect: *We don't mind it. When people take a long time to get something done.* (LE)

Correct: We don't mind it when people take a long time to get something done.

These two examples are errors in fragments in that the students began the sentences with 'but' and 'when', and did not complete the sentences with main clauses. This reflects an inadequate ability to form complex sentences. One possible explanation of this type of error might be the students were not able to master the use of main and subordinate clauses which were considered complicated grammatical aspects. In particular, 'Clauses containing *it* with adverbial clauses', one of the language focuses of the first assignment, as shown in example 2, is quite complicated because a main clause containing 'it' cannot be completed by itself, but needs a subordinate clause, that is, an adverbial clause beginning with 'when' to make it complete and understandable. In addition, the students might have lacked knowledge of the use of punctuation between clauses. Generally, there is no need to use punctuation marks, especially periods, or have breaks between clauses in written Thai (Ubol, 1979). Hence, it is very difficult for the students to use this kind of punctuation correctly to separate sentences.

4.2.1.2 Errors in Omission

Errors in omission that occurred with the highest frequency in students with high EEE scores' assignments were omission of verbs (14.81%) and object pronouns (14.81%). This was followed by omission of subject pronouns (9.26%), and omission of nouns in subject and object positions (7.41%). As for students with low EEE scores, omission of verbs was also the most frequent type (30.61%), followed by omission of object pronouns (17.35%) and omission of subject pronouns (9.18%).

Following are examples of errors in omission:

Omission of Object Pronouns:

Example 1

Incorrect: *I promise I give back to in good condition.* (HE)

Correct: I promise I will give it back to you in good condition.

Example 2

Incorrect: *It makes happy if we can share our ideas when people are expressing their ideas and opinion to us.* (LE)

Correct: It makes us happy if we can share our ideas when people are expressing their ideas and opinion to us.

Omission of Verbs:

Example 3

Incorrect: *In addition, it must be tried when staying in rural areas because it quite incomfort.* (HE)

Correct: In addition, you must be tired when staying in rural areas because it is quite uncomfortable.

Example 4

Incorrect: *His parents proud of him very much.* (LE)

Correct: His parents were very proud of him.

The first two examples involve omission of obligatory object pronouns. In Thai, both transitive and intransitive verbs exist as do in English but objects of

transitive verbs can be optionally omitted in case they appear in the immediate context (Ubol, 1979). Apart from the differences between Thai and English, the inadequacy of knowledge of verb forms could be another cause for these errors. The students in the study might not be able to distinguish transitive and intransitive verbs and this, accordingly, could have led to the wrong use of these two kinds of verbs resulting in omission of object pronouns. Another explanation of the fact that most students made errors in omission of verbs, especially the verb 'be' preceding adjectival complements as shown in examples 3 and 4, might be L1 interference. The problem was, as suggested in Ubol's study, Thai adjectives may be perceived as verbs due to their existence in verb positions of the sentences. Unlike in English, in Thai it is unnecessary to antecede adjectives with the verb 'be' in predicates; nevertheless, adjectives do not exactly function as verbs in Thai. The students might not have been aware of this fact resulting in omission of main verbs in English sentences when the sentences contained adjectival complements.

4.2.2 Errors in Tenses

The second type of common grammatical errors is errors in tenses. The following table presents the sub-types and frequency of errors in tenses the students frequently produced in their written assignments.

Table 4.4 Sub-types and Frequency of Errors in Tenses Made by Students with High and Low EEE Scores

6. Tenses	HE		LE	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6.1 Simple past				
6.1.1 Misuse of past continuous tense for simple past tense in sentences with 'While clause'	-	-	2	3.92
6.1.2 Misuse of other tenses for simple past tense	27	61.36	29	56.86
6.1.3 Wrong form of verbs in past tense	3	6.82	2	3.92
Total	30	68.18	33	64.70
6.2 Past continuous				
6.2.1 Misuse of simple past tense for past continuous tense in sentences with 'While clause'	-	-	2	3.92
6.2.2 Misuse of other tenses for past continuous tense	-	-	-	-
6.2.3 Omission of 'V. to be'	-	-	2	3.92
Total	0	0.00	4	7.84
6.3 Simple present				
6.3.1 Misuse of other tenses for simple present tense	6	13.64	4	7.84
Total	6	13.64	4	7.84
6.4 Present continuous				
6.4.1 Misuse of other tenses for present continuous tense	-	-	-	-
6.4.2 Omission of 'V. to be'	-	-	1	1.96
Total	0	0.00	1	1.96
6.5 Past perfect				
6.5.1 Misuse of other tenses for past perfect tense	1	2.27	4	7.84
6.5.2 Omission of past participle	-	-	-	-
6.5.3 Wrong form of past participle	-	-	3	5.88
Total	1	2.27	7	13.72

6. Tenses	HE		LE	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6.6 Present perfect				
6.6.1 Misuse of other tenses for present perfect tense	-	-	1	1.96
6.6.2 Omission of past participle	-	-	-	-
6.6.3 Wrong form of past participle	-	-	-	-
Total	0	0.00	1	1.96
6.7 Future				
6.7.1 Misuse of other tenses for future tense	7	15.91	1	1.96
6.7.2 Omission of 'will'	-	-	-	-
Total	7	15.91	1	1.96
Grand total	44	100.00	51	100.00
Percentage of total errors (95)	46.32		53.68	

Note: See Appendix G for detailed findings.

As presented in Table 4.4, the percentage of total errors represented by errors in tenses made by students with high EEE scores (46.32%) was close to that of students with low EEE scores (53.68%). Of the sub-types of tense errors, errors using the simple past tense accounted for the highest percentages in both the high EEE group and the low EEE group, with 68.18% and 64.70% respectively. In particular, the errors were misuse of other tenses for simple past tense, 61.36% and 56.86% respectively.

The fact that most errors in tenses were related to errors in simple past tense, particularly misuse of other tenses for simple past tense which were frequently found in the fourth assignment may have been induced by the content of the unit in which the students were required to write a narrative story. Besides, this sub-type of error was rarely found in the other three assignments because they did not focus on the use of past tenses (see Chapter 3 and Appendix G).

Examples of errors in misuse of other tenses for simple past tense are as follows:

Misuse of Other Tenses for Simple Past Tense:

Example 1

Incorrect: *Tang graduates from Thidanukhro School while Lek graduates from Hatyaiwittayalai School. (HE)*

Correct: *Tang graduated from Thidanukhro School while Lek graduated from Hatyaiwittayalai School.*

Example 2

Incorrect: *They have a good pretty conversation and fell in love with each other. (LE)*

Correct: *They had a pretty good conversation and fell in love with each other.*

In the first example, the students used present simple tense in describing past events. It could indicate that the students might not conceptualize the use of the present and past tenses. This could occur in relation to L1 interference in which Thais rather use context and adverbs of time to help signify tenses (Lush, 2002, Srichai, 2002, Lukanavanich, 1988, and Ubol, 1979). Therefore, when the students themselves were not aware of a time reference indicated by the context or when adverbs of time were absent, the students often turned to simple present tense instead of simple past tense. In addition, simple present tense is the first tense they learned and its structure is simple for them to apply. Although the structure of simple past tense was also thought to be simple, the students learned it after that of simple present tense. Therefore, they tend to rely heavily on simple present tense. This possibly was one of the causes of why the students could not master this tense. The other cause lies in the inconsistency of the students in using tenses. As Srichai (2002) and Lukanavanich (1988) pointed out, students often lack consistency in narrating a story. This phenomenon occurs even in the case where students have already mastered the form for the simple past tense but cannot use it accurately. An instance of occurrence in example 2 shows that the student used present simple tense at the beginning of the story followed by past simple tense.

4.2.3 Errors in Agreement

Table 4.5 shows the frequency of errors in agreement and in its sub-types found in written assignments of students with high and low EEE scores.

Table 4.5 Sub-types and Frequency of Errors in Agreement Made by Students with High and Low EEE Scores

8. Agreement	HE		LE	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
8.1 <i>Subject-verb agreement</i>	32	57.14	33	58.93
8.2 <i>Determiner-noun agreement</i>	1	1.79	3	5.36
8.3 <i>Noun/pronoun-antecedent agreement</i>	23	41.07	20	35.71
Total	56	100.00	56	100.00
Percentage of total errors (112)	50.00		50.00	

Note: See Appendix G for detailed findings.

The data reveals that the students in both groups made more errors in subject-verb agreement than in the other types of agreement. Also, it can be seen that subject-verb agreement and noun/pronoun-antecedent agreement were problematic for both groups of students since the majority of errors in agreement that the students committed fell into these two sub-types. As shown in the table, errors in subject-verb agreement made by students with high EEE scores, 57.14%, occurred slightly less frequently than those made by students with low EEE scores, 58.93%. However, students with high EEE scores made more errors in noun/pronoun-antecedent agreement than students with low EEE scores, 41.07% and 35.71% respectively. One possible strategy employed by students with low EEE scores is that they might have avoided using pronouns wherever possible. This resulted in a fewer errors in noun/pronoun-antecedent agreement. As for determiner-noun agreement, errors were rarely found in either of the two groups' assignments. It should be noted that although the total number of errors in agreement made by each group of students was equal (56), the rank of this type of errors of the two groups was highly different as can be seen in Table 4.2. This is because the total number of all 23 types of errors made by

students with low EEE scores was much more than that of students with high EEE scores. Consequently, errors in agreement were not the most frequent type found in students with low EEE scores' written work.

Examples of errors in subject-verb agreement and noun/pronoun-antecedent agreement follow:

Subject-verb Agreement:

Example 1

Incorrect: *She remember that she is sometimes late for appointments.*
(LE)

Correct: *She remembers that she is sometimes late for appointments.*

Example 2

Incorrect: *She has a good sense of humor so everyone like her.* (HE)

Correct: *She has a good sense of humor, so everyone likes her.*

As shown in the first example, the subject and verb of the sentence did not agree. The students omitted –s in a verb ‘remember’ which could be traced to their L1, Thai, in which addition of third person singular –s ending does not exist. Even in English, these forms also inflect inconsistently (Ubol, 1979). That is to say, there are both addition of –s and –es after English verbs. Moreover, this could reflect the students’ incomplete application of agreement rules in that they did not conjugate a verb in accord with a third person pronoun, ‘she’. Another possibility of this phenomenon is that the students might not have been aware that a third person pronoun ‘she’ is singular which needs the inflections of a verb ‘remember’. The other example, on the other hand, can show the students’ misunderstanding of the word ‘everyone’ which means ‘all people’. Because of its meaning, some students might have inferred that the verb should be in a plural form instead of a singular form.

Noun/pronoun-antecedent Agreement:

Example 1

Incorrect: *He or she do something as well as they can without worry too much about it.* (HE)

Correct: He or she does something as well as he or she can without worrying too much about it.

Example 2

Incorrect: *She worry about whether you can deal with it when faced with a difficult challenge.* (LE)

Correct: She worries about whether she can deal with it when faced with a difficult challenge.

There are a few possible explanations for wrong use of noun/pronoun-antecedent agreement in example 1. This example demonstrates that the students might have been unaware of the need to use pronouns in accord with their antecedents. Another possible explanation of this error is the students' false concept hypothesized of English pronouns in which they could assume that there are two third person pronouns in '*he or she*', hence it would appear to be a plural subject. Also, they might have confused the use of '*or*' with another conjunction i.e. '*and*' or might have related the actual use of the two conjunctions, so they used a plural pronoun '*they*' in place of a singular pronoun. As for the second example of errors in pronoun-antecedent agreement, it is possible that the students copied the clauses provided in their coursebook without changing the pronoun. It is also possible that the students might not have known what should be changed in the sentences. This is simply a reflection of either their carelessness or their ignorance of rule of pronoun-antecedent concord.

4.2.4 Errors in Nouns

The following table presents the frequency of errors in nouns and its sub-types made by both groups of students in their written assignments.

Table 4.6 Sub-types and Frequency of Errors in Nouns Made by Students with High and Low EEE Scores

11. Nouns	HE		LE	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<i>11.1 Misuse of other parts of speech for nouns</i>	4	7.69	9	13.43
<i>11.2 Misuse of singular for plural nouns</i>	39	75.00	47	70.15
<i>11.3 Misuse of plural for singular nouns</i>	6	11.54	3	4.48
<i>11.4 Unnecessary insertion of plural markers</i>	-	-	7	10.40
<i>11.5 Unnecessary insertion of nouns</i>	3	5.77	1	1.49
Total	52	100.00	67	100.00
Percentage of total errors (119)	43.70		56.30	

Note: See Appendix G for detailed findings.

Table 4.6 shows that errors in misuse occurred in the students' assignments more frequently than errors in unnecessary insertion. Specifically, misuse of singular for plural nouns had the highest frequency of occurrence in both groups; 75.00% and 70.15% respectively for students with high and low EEE scores. Moreover, for students with high EEE scores, a greater percentage of errors was represented by misuse of plural for singular nouns and unnecessary insertion of nouns than was found for students with low EEE scores. However, students with high EEE scores made fewer errors in misuse of other parts of speech for nouns than those with low EEE scores. The students' errors in misuse of singular for plural nouns might occur because both countable and uncountable nouns in Thai are regarded as singular, while plurality is indicated by numbers and classifiers.

The following are examples of errors in misuse of singular for plural nouns:

Misuse of Singular for Plural Nouns:

Example 1

Incorrect: *In addition, you would have many money and meet popular singer.* (LE)

Correct: *In addition, you would have much money and meet popular singers.*

Example 2

Incorrect: *You would meet many new people and some of them might be important person.* (HE)

Correct: You would meet many new people and some of them might be important people.

As Lush (2002) and Lukanavanich (1988) pointed out, in Thai, there is no plural marker –s for plural nouns nor is there a change of noun forms, since all nouns are considered singular. Instead, Thais rely on numbers and classifiers to indicate plurality. The two illustrations above represent the influence of the native language, Thai, in the students' written English work in which the students used singular nouns in place of plural nouns. Moreover, the students could not probably recognize that a noun '*singer*', in example 1, requires the addition of –s. As for example 2, a change in a noun form of '*person*' into '*people*' was likely to reflect their lack of knowledge of English plural forms, or they might not understand the use of '*some*' which is an indefinite pronoun referring back to the plural noun '*people*' just mentioned and referring forward to the same noun.

4.2.5 Errors in Articles

The sub-types and frequency of errors in articles made by both groups of students in their written assignments are presented in the following table.

Table 4.7 Sub-types and Frequency of Errors in Articles Made by Students with High and Low EEE Scores

20. Articles	HE		LE	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
20.1 Indefinite articles (a, an)				
20.1.1 Misuse of 'the' for 'a/ an'	2	4.44	-	-
20.1.2 Misuse of 'a' for 'an'/'an' for 'a'	2	4.44	2	4.26
20.1.3 Omission of 'a, an'	19	42.22	18	38.30
20.1.4 Unnecessary insertion	2	4.44	11	23.40
Total	25	55.56	31	65.96
20.2 Definite article (the)				
20.2.1 Misuse of 'a/ an' for 'the'	2	4.44	1	2.13
20.2.2 Omission of 'the'	13	28.89	8	17.02
20.2.3 Unnecessary insertion	5	11.11	7	14.89
Total	20	44.44	16	34.04
Grand Total	45	100.00	47	100.00
Percentage of total errors (92)	48.91		51.09	

Note: See Appendix G for detailed findings.

Omission of indefinite and definite articles accounted for high percentages of article errors for both groups of students. 42.22% and 38.30% of the errors in the assignments of students with high and low EEE scores, respectively, were omission of 'a' and 'an'. Omission of 'the' accounted for 28.89% and 17.02%, respectively, of the errors. Markedly, omission of indefinite articles (a, an) more frequently occurred than that of definite articles (the) on the whole. The data indicates that errors in misuse of indefinite and definite articles had a low rate of occurrence in both groups of students' written assignments. However, the students especially students with low EEE scores, unnecessarily inserted both definite and indefinite articles in their assignments.

The following examples illustrate errors in omission of 'a, an' and omission of 'the':

Omission of 'a, an':

Example 1

Incorrect: *Cindy wanted to be millionaire.* (HE)

Correct: Cindy wanted to be a millionaire.

Example 2

Incorrect: *Working as a criminal lawyer would be interesting job.* (LE)

Correct: Working as a criminal lawyer would be an interesting job.

Omission of 'the':

Example 3

Incorrect: *Of course, I can see you off at airport.* (HE)

Correct: Of course, I can see you off at the airport.

Example 4

Incorrect: *I would like to go with you, but I must go to receive my brother at airport.* (LE)

Correct: I would like to go with you, but I must go to pick my brother up at the airport.

It can be seen that both indefinite and definite articles (a, an, the) were problematic for the students. It is very common for Thai students to have difficulty with articles since the article system does not exist in Thai, which is quite easy to be neglected (Srichai, 2002, Lukanavanich, 1988, and Ubol, 1979). The first two examples are cases in which students omitted 'a, an' before a singular noun and a noun modified by an adjective respectively. As illustrated in the other two examples, both groups of students similarly omitted 'the' before a particular noun 'airport' in their third assignments. They may not have been aware that both indefinite and definite articles are obligatory in English. This indicates that the students might have been preoccupied by the rules of their mother tongue. Another plausible explanation is that the students might not have been sure of what should be added, between 'an' and 'the', before the noun 'airport'. They, therefore, employed avoidance strategy by deciding to omit the article needed.

4.2.6 Errors in Spelling

The following table presents the frequency of errors in spelling and its sub-types found in both groups of students' written assignments.

Table 4.8 Sub-types and Frequency of Errors in Spelling Made by Students with High and Low EEE Scores

23. Spelling	HE		LE	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
23.1 <i>Doubling final consonants</i>	2	4.88	1	1.64
23.2 <i>Final -e</i>	-	-	-	-
23.3 <i>The suffix -ful</i>	-	-	-	-
23.4 <i>ie and ei</i>	4	9.76	2	3.28
23.5 <i>Words ending in y</i>	-	-	-	-
23.6 <i>Words ending in f</i>	1	2.44	2	3.28
23.7 <i>Hyphens</i>	1	2.44	-	-
23.8 <i>Full stops with abbreviations</i>	-	-	-	-
23.9 <i>Splitting</i>	6	14.63	-	-
23.10 <i>Merging</i>	-	-	6	9.84
23.11 <i>Mispronouncing</i>	13	31.71	9	14.75
23.12 <i>Others</i>	14	34.15	41	67.21
Total	41	100.00	61	100.00
Percentage of total errors (102)	40.20		59.80	

Note: See Appendix G for detailed findings.

Errors in spelling accounted for a fairly high percentage of total errors for both groups, with the students with low EEE scores producing this type of error much more than the students with high EEE scores (59.80% and 40.20% respectively). Most of the spelling errors fell into the 'others' category (34.15% for students with high EEE scores and 67.21% for students with low EEE scores). As most spelling errors occurred in vocabulary words that the students from both groups should have been familiar with through years of prior study, it appears that many of the spelling errors were a matter of their carelessness. They used, for example, '*stutied*' for '*studied*',

'*accept*' for '*accept*', '*orthe*' for '*other*', '*futher*' for '*further*', '*opinins*' for '*opinions*' and '*withe*' for '*with*'.

Mispronunciation of English words was a factor in spelling errors for students with high and low EEE scores (31.71% and 14.75% respectively). This could have been a result of the differences between Thai and English sound systems. The examples of '*alway*' for '*always*' and '*sometime*' for '*sometimes*' might have reflected interlingual transfer. Where students might have failed to pronounce a final 's' in speaking – for the Thai sound system, a final 's' sound does not exist– the students also failed to write the final 's'. Another explanation could possibly be due to the students' carelessness to add –s in these words while writing.

Other examples concerned the splitting of words frequently done by students with high EEE scores (14.63%) such as '*bath room*' for '*bathroom*', '*boy friend*' for '*boyfriend*' and '*further more*' for '*furthermore*'. In this case, the students separated one word into two units. The phenomenon of splitting one word into two meaningful words was frequently found. This contrasted sharply with another type of misspelling in which the students often merged two words together instead of splitting them. '*Forexample*' for '*for example*', '*somepeople*' for '*some people*' and '*meetingroom*' for '*meeting room*' were some illustrations of the merging of words which was one of the frequent types of spelling errors made by students with low EEE scores (9.84%). Such errors could be a result of students' lack of knowledge of vocabulary or the spelling rules, or could be due to their carelessness.

What can be drawn from the findings and the discussion above regarding FE I students' writing errors is that students with high EEE scores and students with low scores made similar types of grammatical errors, albeit with differing frequencies. Of the 23 types of errors identified, both groups had the highest occurrence of errors in incomplete sentences, nouns, agreement, spelling, tenses, and articles. These six types of errors were also common grammatical errors.

It appears that the major cause of errors produced by the students in this study might be mother tongue interference. The students mostly used Thai structure in English written assignments which, in turn, caused grammatical errors. Other possible causes of the errors were the students' inadequacy of knowledge, incomplete application of rules, false concept hypothesized, ignorance of certain rules, and

avoidance strategy. Moreover, it was found that some of the errors might have been induced by the content of FE I written assignments. In addition, the students' carelessness was possibly another main cause of most errors.