



**A STUDY OF PROBLEMS IN THE BUSINESS ENGLISH
WRITING SKILLS OF THAI EMPLOYEES AT
THE CLASSIC CHAIRS COMPANY**

BY

MISS THANDARIN DECHAROTCHANAWIRUN

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH FOR CAREERS
LANGUAGE INSTITUTE
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2015
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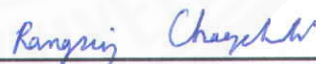
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THAI EMPLOYEES AT THE CLASSIC CHAIRS COMPANY

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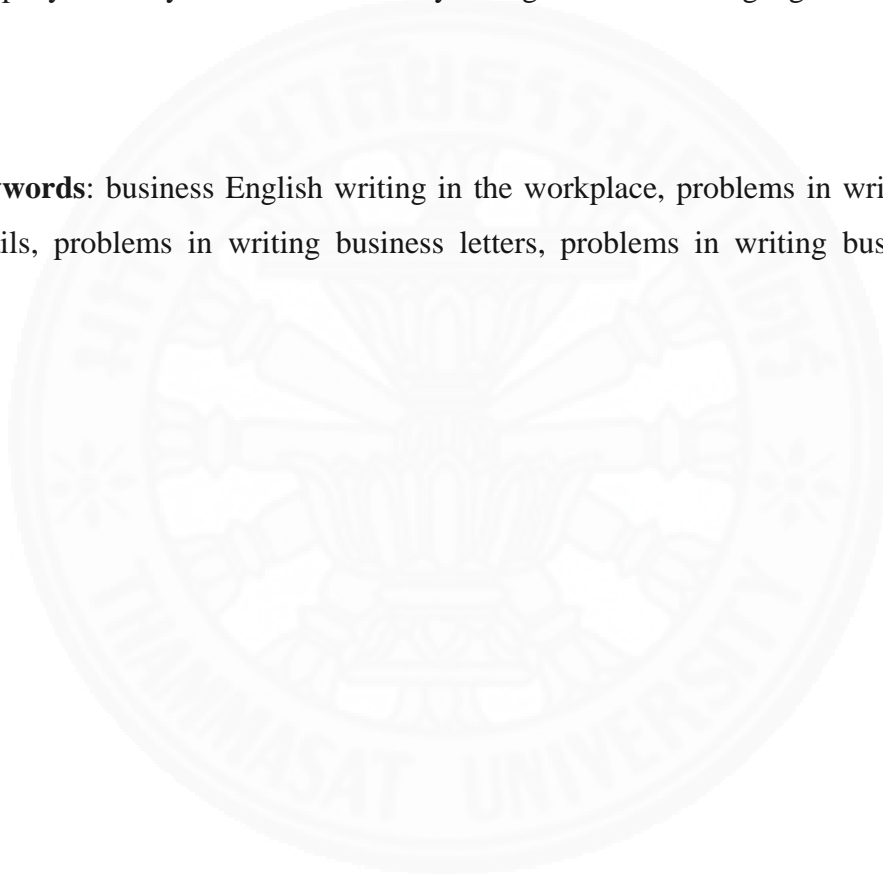
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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate problems in the business English writing skills of Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Company. It was designed to survey the significant problems and the suggestions to improve English writing skills in this company. The study adopted purposive and quota sampling methods, where questionnaires were used to collect data. The total number of respondents was 30 respondents who worked in sales and marketing, logistics, accounting and production departments which usually use English at the company. Due to limited time, this study focused on finding the problems in writing emails, letters and reports. The study showed that the most common problem in the business writing email at The Classic Chairs Company was to writing grammatically correct emails, followed by the problem that they cannot use a wide range of vocabulary in their business English email. The most common problem in writing business letters at The Classic Chairs Company was to write clear and precise letters, followed by the problem that they cannot manage time

for writing letters properly. The most common problem in writing business reports at The Classic Chairs Company was to use sentence structure in their reports properly, followed by the problem that they cannot structure paragraphs of their business report properly. In terms of suggestions to improve English writing skills, the respondents emphasized self-study, in-house training of English writing skill provided by the company and they should be trained by taking courses at a language institute.

Keywords: business English writing in the workplace, problems in writing business emails, problems in writing business letters, problems in writing business reports



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	(1)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	(3)
LIST OF TABLES	(6)
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Research Questions	2
1.3 Objective Of the Study	2
1.4 Definition of Terms	3
1.5 Scope of the Study	3
1.6 Significance of the Study	3
1.7 Organization of the Study	3
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	5
2.1 Business English Writing in the Workplace	5
2.1.1 Emails	5
2.1.2 Letters	7
2.1.3 Reports	8
2.2 Problems in English Business Writing	9

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	12
3.1 Respondents	12
3.2 Research Tool	12
3.3 Procedures	14
3.3.1 Research Design	14
3.3.2 Data Collection	14
3.4 Data Analysis	14
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	16
4.1 General Background Information of the Respondents	16
4.2 Problems in Business English Writing Skills in the Workplace	20
4.3 Suggestions how to Improve Business English Writing Skills in the Workplace.	26
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	28
5.1 Summary of the Findings	28
5.2 Conclusion	29
5.3 Recommendations	30
REFERENCES	31
APPENDICE	
APPENDIX: Questionnaire	34
BIOGRAPHY	41

LIST OF TABLES

Tables	Page
4.1 Gender of the Respondents	16
4.2 Age	17
4.3 Education	17
4.4 English skills usage in the workplace	17
4.5 Problems in English skills usage in the workplace	18
4.6 Time spent on writing and replying to business English Writing types	18
4.7 Reasons for using business English emails of the employees	19
4.8 Business English writing types using of the employees	20
4.9 Problems in English writing emails	21
4.10 Problems in English writing letters	22
4.11 Problems in English writing reports	24
4.12 Suggestions how to improve business English writing skills in the workplace	27

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Globalization has caused the number of international companies to increase. As a result, people from various countries need to communicate with each other more than in the past and the English language is often used for intercultural communication (Petterson, 2015). The English language has become the main factor for business and in the international workplace. Consequently, competence in English is an important requirement for any professional, working in a global business environment. English communication skills are the key to success in a career path and organization. Writing skill is an important skill in today's businesses since people use this skill to transmit messages, ideas, and feelings in order to establish good relationships and understanding (Guffey & Du-Bacock, 2010).

The Classic Chairs Co., Ltd.

The Classic Chairs Co., Ltd., a manufacturer, importer and exporter of very high quality furniture and reproductions from the 18th and early 19th century, was founded in 1957 in London, England. The head office in Thailand is located on New Petchaburi Road in Bangkok. The main products are sofas, chairs, tables, cabinets, and accessories. All furniture is made from specially selected woods such as mahogany, rosewood, and oak. The furniture sold to customers in Thailand and other countries, and the business has been expanding rapidly both domestically and internationally. According to the International Tropical Timber Organization (2004), international trade in wooden furniture has increased, creating more export opportunities for developing countries.

As a result, the employees at The Classic Chairs Company have to use English skills for business communication increasingly.

The researcher observed employees at The Classic Chairs Co., Ltd. and found that employees in every department need to use English language, especially writing skill via emails, letters and reports for communication within the company and with others, namely suppliers, customers, and shipping agents. Nevertheless, there was some miscommunication in using English writing such as grammar errors and incorrect vocabulary, and the lack of correct English writing can lead to business mistakes and cause damage.

For these reasons, this study aims to survey the problems related to the business English writing skills of Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Co., Ltd.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the significant problems in using English writing skills such as emails, letters, and reports of Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Company?
2. What are the suggestions to improve the English writing skills in this company?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are the following:

1. To survey the significant problems in using English writing skills of the employees in the workplace.
2. To find out the suggestions to improve English writing skills in this company

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definition of each term of this study is as follows:

1. **Problems** refer to the English writing problems that the employees at The Classic Chairs Company encounter in their duties.
2. **English writing skills** refer to emails, letters, and reports.
3. **Respondents** refer to the employees at The Classic Chairs Company.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is focused on surveying the problems related to the business English writing skills of the employees at The Classic Chairs Company in order to improve their English writing skills. The research instrument was a questionnaire, which consisted of three parts with 40 questions.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to survey the problems in business English writing skills of the employees at The Classic Chairs Company. The findings from this study could provide useful information to help improve their English writing skills in the workplace, which will increase their confidence. As a result, their productivity and performance will increase.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The contents of this study are divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1: The introduction consists of background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, definition of terms, scope of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2: This chapter includes the literature review in business writing in the workplace, and problems in English business writing.

Chapter 3: Methodology includes descriptions of the respondents, the research tools, the procedures, and data analysis.

Chapter 4: Results of the study are presented and an interpretation of the research findings is provided.

Chapter 5: The study finishes with the conclusion, discussion, and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in two main parts:

2.1 Business writing in the workplace.

2.1.1 Emails

2.1.2 Letters

2.1.3 Reports

2.2 Problems in English business writing.

2.1 BUSINESS ENGLISH WRITING IN THE WORKPLACE

According to Gale (2014), business writing is one type of communication, which is used every day in all workplaces. There are many types of business writing, including emails, letters, reports, memos, faxes, instructions to customers, presentations, research and development, and marketing campaigns, which usually come with standard structure and style.

Due to the limitation of time, this study will focus three types of business writing, i.e. emails, letters, and reports.

2.1.1 Emails

Guffey & Du-Babcock (2010, p.100) mentioned that email has been the alternative communication channel lately. Communication by email is “a process and

continuous activity”, which means both sender and receiver cannot revoke the information or messages delivered.

According to Guffey & Du-Babcock (2010, p.107), good business communications are brief, the content should be easy to read and understand, and unnecessary words, sentences, or even paragraphs should be deleted. Improvement of readability should be sought through the use of headings, bulleted listings, side headings, and an introduction that explains what will follow. Cultural differences should be considered so the content is clear and precise in language; cliché, jargon, and slang that causes confusion abroad should be avoided. The writer should double-check before sending and use spell check.

Locker & Kaczmarek (2011) stated that email has many advantages in business communication; for instance, employees can decrease working time by using email to communicate and convey information promptly.

Levitt & Craig (2006) reported the instruction on writing clear emails has a positive impact on readers. Senders have to realize the needs of the audiences and try to keep messages short and clear. Senders also have to summarize the topic, and subject line should be action-oriented and short with the use of proper words, for instance, a precise verb that expresses the action requested. The introduction should be clear with a clear heading that can describe the proposal and action required. In developing the body, senders have to identify each body part with a heading, for example, use a numbered list to identify the priorities. In addition, the conclusion is important; senders have to state the conclusion with a heading to identify the section and concisely summarize the message as well as emphasize the key points.

According to Gabriela (2008), emails should be use the passive voice because the sentences will be vague and impersonal. On the other hand, the use of active voice is direct, concise and authoritative. It is also more natural sounding than passive voice.

2.1.2 LETTERS

Flanagan (2007) stated that business letter is a message written on letterhead paper and addressed to people outside the company. It is usually delivered via the mail. The body of the letter is made up of the introduction, middle and conclusion.

Klompere (2006) reported the official letters are used carefully concern relationships. It should not mention about the sensitive matter, and respect the readers by using polite word. Just the opposite, writers are normally straight forward to make sure to make things done. Business letters are action-oriented styles, outstanding with explicit words and simple sentences that can get things done through business written communication.

Media and Rush (2015) mentioned that letters can help support the business image to look good and professional. Business letters can be used to confirm in written form when contract is plenary in spoken communication.

Muckian and Woods (1996) reported that letter is designed to inform, convince, oblige or just communicate the information to the readers. The effective writing letter should be clear by using language, words, and phrases that the reader understands, while avoid jargon and unfamiliar words and phrases. Letters include with the important information to create the point and encourage action that the letter requests. Writers should keep letters short, direct to the point and use number, ratio, and facts while

checking spelling and grammar. This will help clarify the communication's purpose. Letters consisted of words and phrases that make a positive tone. Additionally, writing that is informal and colloquial will be more easily understood and better received.

2.1.3 REPORTS

According to Sue, Fryar and Thomas (1994), business report writing is utilized for a wide ranging of topics and objectives, and a report can fluctuate in length, content, and format. Reports have several types such as annual reports, monthly sales reports, management may request the report analyzing a specific issue. It is essential to set the purpose of the report before writing. For instance, report of evaluation of the need for new quality controls in manufacturing, report of investigation competitors' products and services.

Sue, Fryar and Thomas (1994) reported that the effective business report writing should determine the readers cause they may differ to be superior, middle or line management, colleague, the customers, potential customers, the government, or other companies in the similar market. Knowing who the readers are can help determining what type of information to contain in the report. Reports should contain research, interviews, and personal knowledge about the topic that conclude from both external and internal written works and materials to the company. Conclusions or recommendations in the report are important that should be based on quality information. It is necessary to cite all the sources in the final report properly.

The School of Marketing and International Business, and the Student Learning Support Service Victoria University of Wellington (20) mentioned that writing an

effective business report is an important skill for transmitting ideas in the business surrounding. Reports usually state a particular issue or problem, and are often appointed when a decision needs to be made. To achieve good readability, report should state effective headings and subheadings. It is also necessary that the level of headings and subheadings are clear by using formatting (font size, bold, etc.). The same level of headings or subheadings should use parallel form. Structure paragraphs should be arranged in a logical sequence beginning with the most important content first. Academic and business writing should be clear keep sentences short and use plain language. It is difficult to understand sentences that are too long and complicated (Write Limited, 2013). The tone of writing should be proper for the audience, gender-neutral terms should be used carefully. Business reports should have a more balanced white space and text to be easier to read also using number pages, footnotes, tables, figures, and appendices appropriately. In addition, the important qualification of professional writing are editing and proofreading.

2.2 PROBLEM IN ENGLISH BUSINESS WRITING

This study will focus on problems in three types of business writing, i.e., emails, letters, and reports, because these three types of business writing are usually used by the employees at The Classic Chairs Company.

As defined in Cambridge Dictionary, the word "*problem*" means a situation, person, or thing that needs attention and needs to be dealt with or solved.

Santithawornying (2014) mentioned that the employees who work at a Thai Japanese leasing company had problems with communication with Japanese staff related to writing emails. The problems were the inability to write emails with correct

grammar and the inability to use a variety of words without consulting a dictionary. They also encountered problems in choosing appropriate words in writing and using Thai grammar in English writing.

Pathomchaiwat (2014) reported that Thai staff at Unicord Public Co., Ltd. had proficiency in writing business emails. Nevertheless, they had problems in using some appropriate sentences, which include the use of outdated expressions and fillers, as well as a lack of conciseness. They are able to improve their writing skills when contacting their foreign customers.

Lentz (2013) reported that employers often complain about the level of their employees' writing skills. Many researchers have investigated writing skills in the workplace from the employer's perspective. Lentz analyzed MBA students' reflections on a course assignment. Their writing strengths and weaknesses were evaluated and the results showed that employers must evaluate employees' writing skill appropriately.

Prapawuttikul (2004) mentioned written communication is time-consuming and estimated that it comprises 30% of work. It is necessary to develop the skill of writing, not only because of the time involved in writing, but also because success may depend upon it. Regardless, information technology has become complicated, so managers at all levels of an organization need to be excellent in business writing.

According to Thep-Ackrapong (2005, p.53), grammar is the most difficult part for Thai students. The difficulty results from many factors, including the typological differences between the two languages and the negative influence of the mother tongue.

Srisitanon (2009) reported that the major problem in using English was the inability to use correct grammar. Even though the majority of employees had cooperated with foreigners for many years, it was hard to transmit opinions or ideas

with correct grammar. The next problems were technical terms, slang, and idiomatic expressions. In addition, it was very difficult to select appropriate words to use for communication.

Tanvibulya (2014) reported that the employees at Electronics Sources Co., Ltd had many problems using correct grammar, sentence structure and presenting data and content. In addition, they had problems using technical terms, choosing appropriate words and putting words in the correct order in sentences. Using vocabulary was also one of their problems.

Davis, McCormick and Hemphill (2000) found that the problems in writing skill were grammar, sentence construction, etc. Senders should consider the English level of the receivers to avoid errors. Grammar is an important problem because English grammar is very different from Thai while it is easier than some other languages.

Berger (1993) reported that good writers should write 12 hours a day, and then they may be able to write this way year after year. Most people cannot write for a long time unless there is some emergency. It is better to try writing as a simple routine in daily life rather than be forced to write hour after hour.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes: (1) the respondents, (2) the research tools, (3) the procedures, and (4) data analysis.

3.1 RESPONDENTS

The purpose of this study was to find the problems in the business English writing skills of employees at The Classic Chairs Company. The population was the employees at The Classic Chairs Company. The purposive sampling method was used to conduct the survey.

The respondents of the study were 30 employees from four main departments: Sales and Marketing, Logistics, Production and Accounting. Employees in these four departments were Thai and use writing skills more often than others; therefore, they were chosen as the respondents. They use English writing such as emails, memos, reports, etc. to communicate with internal and external workplaces, both Thai and foreigners.

3.2 RESEARCH TOOL

A questionnaire was used as a research tool of this study. The questionnaire is designed to survey problems in business English writing skills. The questionnaire contained both closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was adapted from the independent studies of Tanviboonlaya (2014) and Pathomchiwat (2014).

The questionnaire was divided into four parts as follows:

Part1: Background of the respondents:

This part was designed using closed-ended questions to collect personal information, which consisted of gender, age, educational background, occupation, current position, working experience, and frequency of English used in daily life.

Part 2: This part surveyed the problems in using business English writing skills in the workplace via closed-ended questions using a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from “Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree” to “Strongly Disagree” as follows:

Range	
Score	Opinion
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

Part 3: This part contained opened-ended question asking the employees to suggest solutions to problems with business English writing skills in the workplace.

3.3 PROCEDURES

3.3.1 Research Design

The study used the survey method to examine what problems the employees encountered in using business English writing skills. A questionnaire with both closed-ended and open-ended questions was used as the research instrument.

3.3.2 Data Collection

The study was conducted at The Classic Chairs Company. The questionnaire was distributed to 30 employees using purposive and quota sampling. The respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaires were collected after the respondents completed them within ten days of distribution.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

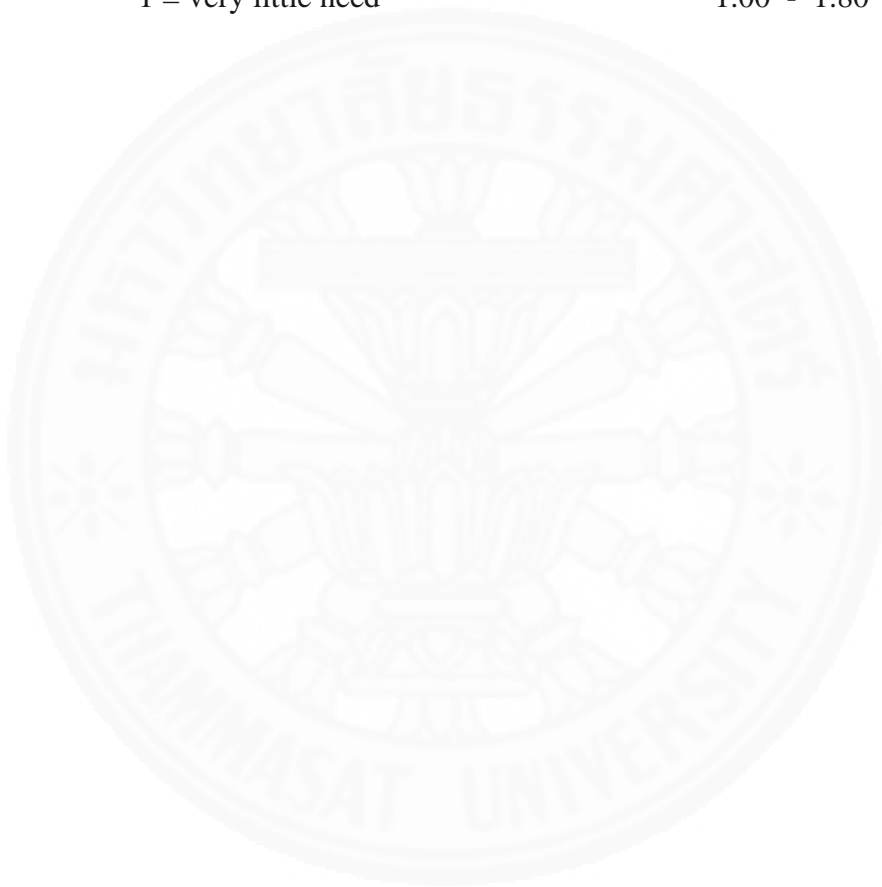
The data was collected and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program, which was used to compute the statistical data as follows:

3.4.1 Part 1: Frequency distribution and percentage was used in the analysis of answers about respondents' general background information.

3.4.2 Part 2: A five-point Likert Scale was used to score their problems in using English in the workplace. To interpret the mean score results, the following formula was used.

$$\text{Mean Range} = \frac{\text{Maximum}-\text{Minimum}}{\text{range}} = \frac{5-1}{5} = 0.8$$

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Mean Range</u>
5 = very great need	4.21 - 5.00
4 = great need	3.41 - 4.20
3 = moderate need	2.61 - 3.40
2 = little need	1.81 - 2.60
1 = very little need	1.00 - 1.80



CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reports on the results and the data analysis to address the two research questions, which was obtained from the questionnaires completed by Thai employees working at The Classic Chairs Company. All 30 copies of the questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

The results of the study are divided into three main parts:

Part 1: General background information

Part 2: Problems in business English writing skills in the workplace

Part 3: Suggestions on how to improve business English writing skills in the workplace

4.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS.

The results included general background information of the respondents: gender, age, education level, working department, time spent on writing per day, English skills usage and problems in the workplace, reasons for using business English emails and type of business English writing usage.

The results are shown as below:

Table 4.1 Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	9	30
Female	21	70
Total	30	100

Table 4.1 shows that the total number of the respondents were 30; 21 employees or 70% were female and 9 employees or 30% were male.

Table 4.2 Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-25	0	0
26-30	3	10
31-35	9	30
36-40	8	27
41-45	7	23
46-50	3	10
Total	30	100

Table 4.2 shows that most of the respondents were between 31-35 years old (30%), while 27% were between 36-40 years; this was followed by those between 41-45 years, which made up 23%. Six respondents were 26-30, the same number as 46-50 years (20%).

Table 4.3 Education

Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Vocational	0	0
High Vocational Certificate	0	0
High School Certificate	0	0
Bachelor's Degree	28	93
Master's Degree	2	7
Total	30	100

Table 4.3 illustrates that most of the respondents held a bachelor's degree (93%) while the rest had a master's degree (7%).

Table 4.4 English skills usage in the workplace

Which English skill do you use most often at work?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reading	7	23.3
Writing	12	40
Speaking	9	30
Listening	2	6.7
Total	30	100

As can be seen in Table 4.4, 12 people representing 40% of employees used English writing skill in the workplace, followed by 30% who used English speaking skill. A total of 23.3% of the respondents used English reading skill, while 6.7% of them used English listening skill at work.

Table 4.5 Problems in English skills usage in the workplace

What English skill is the most serious problem for you in your workplace?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reading	5	16.7
Writing	13	43.3
Speaking	10	33.3
Listening	2	6.7
Total	30	100

As can be seen in Table 4.5, the most significant problem in English skills in the workplace of respondents was English writing skill, representing 43.3% of the total. A total of 33.3% of the respondents had problems in English speaking skill; meanwhile, 16.7% of the respondents had problems in English reading skill and 6.7% had problems in English listening skill at work.

Table 4.6 Time spent on writing and replying to business English Writing types (e-mails, letters and reports) per day

Time spent on writing and replying to business English Writing types (e-mails, letters and reports) per day	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	10	33.3
1-2 hour	12	40
3-4 hours	6	20
5-6 hours	2	6.7
More than 6 hours	0	0
Total	30	100

As can be seen in Table 4.6, 40% of the respondents spent 1-2 hours per day dealing with writing and replying to business English between, while 33.3% of them spent less than 1 hour and 20% of them spent 3-4 hours per day.

Table 4.7 Reasons for using business English emails of the employees

Reasons for Using Business English E-mails of the Employees	Frequency
Asking for inquiries/ giving information / negotiating prices with customers, Suppliers, shipping, forwarders etc.	18
Replying to enquiries and requesting information from customers, Suppliers, shipping, forwarders, etc.	18
Selling new products/packages/promotion	9
Complaining about products or services	6
Sending reports/memos/documents, providing project updates and coordinating activities	11
Receiving instruction/assigning tasks	6
Sharing or providing new information/activities	16
Dealing within organization such as managers, colleagues, subordinates	17

Table 4.7 shows that the respondents (18 people) used business English email for asking for inquiries/giving information/negotiating prices with customers, suppliers, shipping, forwarders; and replying to enquiries and requesting information from customers, suppliers, shipping, forwarders, etc. A total of 17 used business English email for dealings within the organization such as managers, colleagues, subordinates, while 16 used business English email for sharing or providing new information/activities.

Table 4.8 Business English writing types used by the employees

Business English writing types used by the employees	Frequency
E-mails	30
Reports	6
Letters	3

Table 4.8 illustrates that most of the respondents used business English e-mail at the workplace, representing 30 respondents. Six of them used business English reports at the workplace, while three of them used business English letters at the workplace.

4.2 PROBLEMS IN BUSINESS ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE

The second part investigated the problems in the English writing skills of Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Company. This part was divided into three main topics, which were A) problems in English email writing; B) problems in English report writing; and C) problems in English letter writing. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of agreement. The findings are presented in the form of frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation (S.D.). The data in this part are presented in the form of means, which were calculated into ranges using the following criteria.

<u>Degree of Agreement</u>	<u>Mean Range</u>
Strongly Agree	4.21 - 5.00
Agree	3.41 - 4.20
Neutral	2.61 - 3.40
Disagree	1.81 - 2.60
Strongly Disagree	1.00 - 1.80

Table 4.9 Problems in English writing - emails

No.	Description	Rate scale ranges					Mean	S.D.	Degree of agreement
		5	4	3	2	1			
1	I cannot write business English emails.	0	5	11	10	4	2.87	0.72	Neutral
2	I cannot generate my ideas for the articles of business English emails.	9	6	7	8	0	3.53	1.18	Agree
3	I cannot logically organize my ideas when I write my business English emails.	8	9	10	3	0	3.73	0.96	Agree
4	I cannot use appropriate words in my business English emails.	11	7	6	6	0	3.77	1.15	Agree
5	I cannot use a wide range of vocabulary in my business English emails.	11	9	4	6	0	3.83	1.13	Agree
6	I cannot use correct grammar in my business English emails.	14	4	8	4	0	3.93	1.12	Agree
7	I cannot use technical terms in the furniture business in my business writing.	1	7	16	6	0	3.10	0.75	Neutral
8	It is difficult to be clear when writing business English emails.	12	1	6	11	0	3.47	1.33	Agree
9	It is difficult to create email subject lines.	13	2	5	10	0	3.60	1.33	Agree
10	I have difficulty considering cultural differences when writing.	3	11	12	4	0	3.43	0.84	Agree

As can be seen in Table 4.9, most of respondents marked the statement “I cannot use correct grammar in my business English emails”, which was the main problem for them (Mean = 3.93), followed by the problem that they cannot use a wide range of vocabulary in their business English emails (Mean = 3.83) and they cannot use appropriate words in business English emails (Mean = 3.77). They felt neutral with the statement “I cannot write business English emails” (Mean = 2.87) and “I cannot use technical terms in the furniture business in my business writing” (Mean = 3.10).

According to the results above, the significant problems in the English writing emails of the employees related to using correct grammar. The results of the study were in line with the findings of Davis, McCormick and Hemphill (2000), who found that the problems in writing skill were grammar, which is an important problem since English grammar is very different from Thai. Santithawornying (2014) added that the problems in writing email were the inability to write emails with correct grammar. In addition, this result supports the study of Srisitanon (2009), which found that the main problem in using English was the inability to use correct grammar.

Table 4.10 Problems in English writing - letter

No	Description	Rate scale ranges					Mean	S.D	Degree of agreement
		5	4	3	2	1			
11	I don't know the purpose of articles when I write my business letters.	4	4	6	16	0	2.87	1.09	Neutral
12	I don't know the level of the ability of my readers when I write my business letters.	5	7	3	15	0	3.07	1.18	Neutral

No	Description	Rate scale ranges					Mean	S.D	Degree of agreement
		5	4	3	2	1			
13	I don't know the English level of my readers when I write my business letters.	3	7	14	6	0	3.23	0.88	Neutral
14	I cannot use appropriate words in my business letters.	12	5	11	2	0	3.90	1.01	Agree
15	I cannot avoid using jargon and unfamiliar words and phrases when I write my business letters.	6	8	9	7	0	3.43	1.05	Agree
16	I cannot write my business letters with all the information necessary to make the point and clarify whatever action the letter requests.	14	6	5	5	0	3.97	1.14	Agree
17	I cannot choose words and phrases to set a positive tone in my business letters.	7	12	5	6	0	3.67	1.04	Agree
18	I cannot use spell-check and recheck when writing my business letters.	2	13	9	6	0	3.37	0.87	Neutral
19	I cannot make my business letters clear and concise.	14	7	6	3	0	4.07	1.03	Agree
20	I cannot manage the time for writing my business letters properly.	12	10	4	4	0	4.00	1.03	Agree

As can be seen in Table 4.10, the top five problems were the statement “I cannot make my business letters clear and concise” (Mean=4.07), followed by the statement

“I cannot manage the time for writing my business letters properly” (Mean=4.00) and “I cannot write my business letters with all the information necessary to make the point and clarify whatever action the letter requests.” (Mean=3.97). The respondents also agreed with two statements, which were “I cannot use appropriate words in my business letters” (Mean=3.90) and “I cannot choose words and phrases to set a positive tone in my business letters” (Mean=3.67).

The lowest mean score occurred with two problems. The respondents were neutral with the statement “I don’t know the purpose of articles when I write my business letters” (Mean=2.87) and “I don’t know level of the ability of my readers when I write my business letters” (Mean=3.07).

According to the results above, the significant problems in the English letter writing of the employees were problems being clear and concise. The results of the study were in line with the findings of Muckian and Woods (1996), who found that letters are designed to inform, persuade, coerce, threaten or just tell the readers about information. Effective writing letter should be clear and tailored to the reader’s level of understanding.

Table 4.11 Problems in English writing report

No	Description	Rate scale ranges					Mean	S.D.	Degree of agreement
		5	4	3	2	1			
21	I cannot gather information before writing my business reports.	3	14	10	3	0	3.57	0.80	Agree
22	I cannot determine the purpose of my business reports.	0	3	12	9	6	2.40	0.92	Disagree
23	I cannot determine the audiences before writing my business reports.	0	1	16	12	1	2.57	0.62	Disagree

No	Description	Rate scale ranges					Mean	S.D.	Degree of agreement
		5	4	3	2	1			
24	I cannot set the tone in my business reports properly.	7	3	16	4	0	3.43	0.99	Agree
25	I cannot use sentence structure in my business reports properly.	2	18	7	3	0	3.63	0.75	Agree
26	I cannot structure the paragraphs of my business reports properly.	3	18	3	6	0	3.60	0.92	Agree
27	I cannot use effective headings and subheadings in my business reports.	3	15	7	5	0	3.53	0.88	Agree
28	I cannot write my business reports with clear sentences and plain language.	0	18	9	3	0	3.50	0.67	Agree
29	I cannot edit and proofread my business reports.	0	0	21	9	0	2.70	0.46	Neutral
30	I cannot use tables and figures in my business reports.	1	15	11	3	0	3.47	0.72	Agree

As can be seen in Table 4.11, most of respondents agreed with four statements as the highest level of the problems: they cannot use sentence structure in their business reports properly (Mean = 3.63); they cannot structure the paragraphs of their business reports properly (Mean = 3.60); they cannot gather information before writing their business reports (Mean = 3.57); moreover, they cannot use effective headings and subheadings in their business reports (Mean=3.53). The respondents disagreed with the two statement “I cannot determine the audiences before writing my business reports”

(Mean=2.57) and “I cannot determine the purpose of my business reports” (Mean=2.40).

According to the results above, the significant problems in the English report writing of the employees were problems in using sentence structure in their business reports properly. The results of the study were partly in line with the findings of Write Limited (2013) that the difficulty in writing business report related to writing sentences that were clear, concise and easy to understand.

4.3 SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE BUSINESS ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE.

The results in part 3 of the questionnaire showed the respondent’s suggestions on how to improve business English writing skills in the workplace. The open-ended question asked “What will you do to improve your business English writing skills in the workplace?” A total of 60% of the respondents answered this question. The respondents’ suggestions are summarized into six main points as follows.

It can be seen from Table 4.12 that 18 respondents gave suggestions on how to improve business English writing skills in the workplace. Six respondents suggested that they should try to learn and always practice by themselves, followed by five respondents who suggested that the company should provide in-house training on English writing skills. Three respondents suggested that the employees should be trained by taking courses at a language institute. Two respondents gave the suggestion that they should try to find solutions to their problems. Two other respondents also gave suggestions that the employees should determine the objective of the message and prioritize/organize the content to make readers understand better. Writer should always

reread and consider whether any messages lead to misunderstanding. Employees should also read more and find examples of letters and reports from websites. Most of the respondents suggested that they should try to learn and practice by themselves. The finding affirms the study of Berger (1993), which determined that good writers should spend 12 hours a day writing, and they then may be able to write this way year after year.

Table 4.12 Suggestions on how to improve business English writing skills in the workplace.

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage
No suggestions	12	40%
Determine the objective of the message and prioritize/organize the content to make readers understand better. Always reread again and test if any message that leads to misunderstanding	1	3%
Read more and find examples of letters and reports from websites	1	3%
Try to learn and always practice by themselves	6	20%
Try to find solutions to their problems	2	7%
The company should provide in-house training on English writing skills	5	17%
The employees should be trained by taking course at a language institute	3	10%
	30	100%

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the findings, (2) the conclusion, and (3) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

This part summarizes the findings of the study of the data analysis for two research questions as following:

5.1.1 What are the significant problems in using English writing skills, i.e. emails, letters, and reports, of Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Company?

Email: Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Company had a high-level problem using correct grammar, followed by the problem that they cannot use a wide range of vocabulary and they cannot use appropriate words. They felt “neutral” with regard to using technical terms in the furniture business in their business writing.

Letters: Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Company had a high-level problem writing clear and concise letters, followed by the problem that they cannot manage their time for writing letters properly and cannot write letters with all the information necessary to make the point and promote whatever action the letter requests. They felt “neutral” with regard to the purpose of articles in letters and their ability to understand the level of their readers.

Reports: Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Company had a high-level problem using proper sentence structure in their business reports, followed by the problem that they cannot structure paragraphs properly and difficulty gathering information before writing their business reports. Moreover, they “disagreed” that they

cannot determine who the audience is before writing reports or determine the purpose of their reports.

5.1.2 What are the suggestions to improve English writing skills in this company?

The suggestions made by the respondents were that they should try to learn and always practice by themselves, followed by the company should provide in-house training on English writing skills. The employees should be trained by taking courses at a language institute. They should try to find solutions to their problems, determine the objective of the message and organize the content to make readers understand better. Furthermore, they should always reread again and check if any content leads to misunderstanding, as well as reading more and finding examples of email, letters and reports from websites.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Four main conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.2.1 The majority of the respondents rated that the significant problem in English email writing was using correct grammar.

5.2.2 The majority of the respondents rated that the significant problem in English letter writing was being clear and concise.

5.2.3 The majority of the respondents rated that the significant problem in English report writing was using proper sentence structure.

5.2.4 The majority of the respondents suggested that the best way to improve their English writing skills is to try learning and practicing by themselves. On top of

that, the company should provide in-house training on English writing skills for the employees.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for further research.

5.3.1 Further research should increase the number of respondents in order to increase the generalizability of the study results.

5.3.2 Further research should be conducted in other companies related to the furniture business.

5.3.3 The questionnaire in further research should have a test about English writing skill in order to determine the level of respondents' English writing skill.

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APPENDICE

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

A study of problems in the business English writing skills of Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Company

Instruction: This study is a part of an independent study for the requirement of Master of Arts (English for Careers program) Language Institute, Thammasat University. The questionnaire is developed to examine problems in the business English writing skills of Thai employees at The Classic Chairs Company. Please answer every question. Your answer will be kept confidential and will be used only for academic purposes.

The questionnaire is divided into three parts:

Part 1: General background information

Part 2: Problems in business English writing skills in the workplace

Part 3: Suggestions how to improve business English writing skills in the workplace

Part 1: General background information

Instruction: Please fill in the blanks and mark (X) in the box below according to your own information.

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age: 20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50

3. Education:

- Vocational / High Vocational Certificate
- High School Certificate
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Other (Please specify)

4. Department:

- Sales & Marketing
- Logistics
- Accounting
- Production

5. Which English skill do you use most often at work?

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening

6. What English skill is the most serious problem for you in your workplace?

- Reading Writing Speaking Listening

7. Time spent on writing and replying to business English Writing types (e-mail, letter and report) per day.

- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hour
- 3-4 hour

- 5-6 hours
- More than 6 hours

8. Reasons for using business English e-mails (You can give more than one answer).

- Asking for inquiries/ giving information / negotiating prices to customers, Suppliers, shipping, forwarders etc.
- Replying to enquiries and requesting information from customers, Suppliers, shipping, forwarders etc.
- Selling new products/packages/promotion
- Complaining about products or services
- Sending reports/memos/documents, project updates and coordinating activities
- Receiving instruction/assign tasks
- Sharing or providing new information/activities
- Dealing within organization such as manager, colleagues, subordinate
- Other.....

9. Which type of Business English writing do you use the most in your jobs? (You can give more than one answer).

- E-mail
- Report
- Letter

Part 2: Problems in English business writing skills in the workplace

Instruction: Please rate your comments for each item below that reflect your English business writing skills in workplace.

Rate scale ranges from “Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree” as follow:

Range	
Score	Opinion
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

Problems in writing emails

Item no.	Description	Rate scale ranges				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I cannot write business English email.					
2	I cannot generate my ideas for the article of business English email.					
3	I cannot logically organize my ideas when I write my business English email.					
4	I cannot use appropriate words in my business English email.					
5	I cannot use a wide range of vocabulary in my business English email.					
6	I cannot use correct grammar in my business English email.					
7	I cannot use technical term in furniture business in my business writing.					
8	It is difficult to write my business English email with clear and easy to understand.					
9	It is difficult to create email subject line.					
10	I cannot consider the cultural differences when writing.					

Problems in writing letters

Item no.	Description	Rate scale ranges				
		5	4	3	2	1
11	I don't know the purpose of the article when I write my business letter.					
12	I don't know level of understanding ability of my readers when I write my business letter.					
13	I don't know the English level of my readers when I write my business letter.					
14	I cannot use appropriate words in my business letters.					
15	I cannot avoid using jargon and unfamiliar words and phrases when I write my business letters.					
16	I cannot write my business letters with all the information necessary to make the point and promote whatever action the letter requests.					
17	I cannot choose words and phrases to set my business letter a positive tone.					
18	I cannot use spell-check and recheck when writing my business letters.					
19	I cannot write my business letters with clear and short.					
20	I cannot manage time for writing my business letters properly.					

Problems in writing reports

Item no.	Description	Rate scale ranges				
		5	4	3	2	1
21	I cannot consider gathering information before writing my business report.					
22	I cannot use the tone of writing my business report properly.					
23	I cannot use sentence structure in my business report properly.					
24	I cannot determine the audiences before writing my business report.					
25	I cannot determine the purpose of my business report.					
26	I cannot use effective headings and subheadings of my business report.					
27	I cannot structure paragraphs of my business report properly.					
28	I cannot write my business report with clear sentences and plain language.					
29	I cannot edit and proofreading my business report.					
30	I cannot use tables and figures in my business report.					

Part 3: Suggestions how to improve business English writing skills in the workplace

What will you do to improve your business English writing skills in the workplace?

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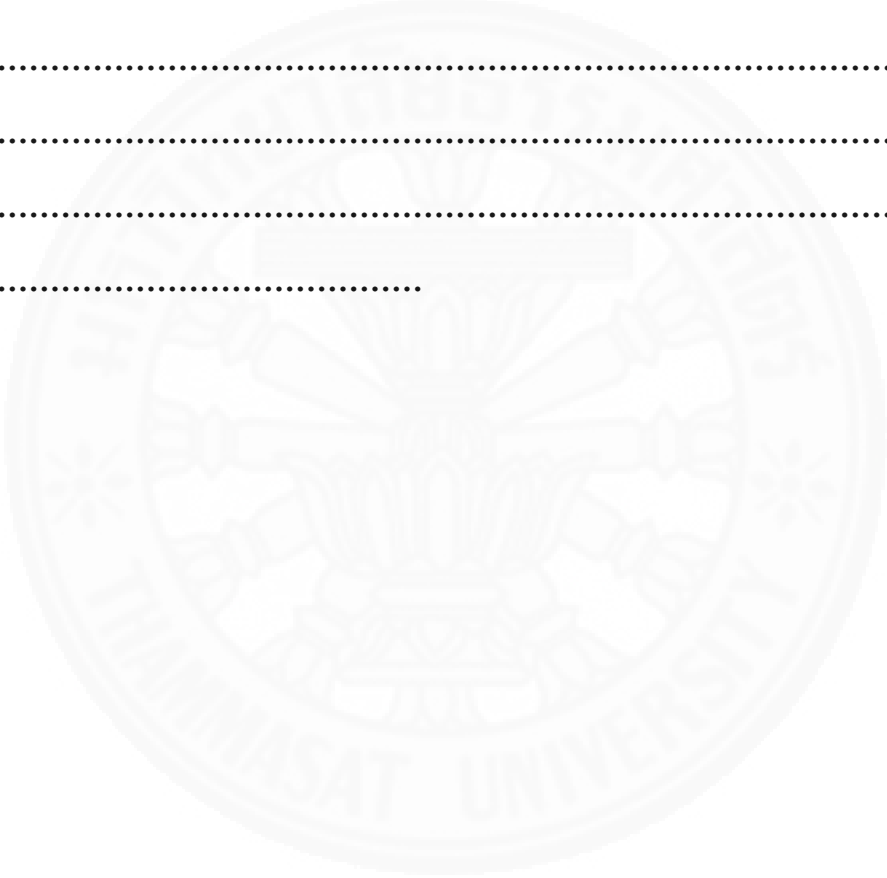
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BIOGRAPHY

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