Chapter – III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Chapter – III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

After the theoretical framework and review of related literature in the previous chapter, this chapter will focus on the research design, data collection procedures, and research tools and data interpretation. The research tools are questionnaire, interviews and essay test. The collected data is interpreted quantitatively as well as qualitatively. This chapter also contains a framework for assessing the writing test which comprises of discussion on cohesion and coherence and error analysis including studies on it. From the discussion, two rubrics are formulated at the end of the chapter to analyse the error, cohesion and coherence.

3.1 Research Design

Research Design is the skeleton of the study. (Perry, 2005) According to Kothari (2004), research design is the blue print in which the collection, measurement and analysis of data are done. The selection of a research design depends on the nature and the extent of the information that the researcher intends to achieve. The research is a case study of Thai and Manipuri Learners’ competence in English particularly written competence of
undergraduate students of Mahachulalongkornrajyavidyalaya University, Chiangmai campus, Thailand and three selected colleges under Manipur University, Imphal-West.

Gall et al. (1996) gave the definition of a case study as –

... the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon. A case study is done to shed light on a phenomenon, which is the processes, events, persons or things of interest to the researcher (545, cited in Perry, 2005: 77).

The purpose for conducting a case study is either to test already constructed theory or to formulate a hypothesis based on the study. It can also be designed for the exploration of phenomena through multiple variables (Meriam, 1998). What comprise cases in this study in L2 research can be individual groups, organisations or events as these can provide real life data of what the researchers want to probe or prove (Duff, 2008). In the study, the researcher’s cases are the Thai learners of Mahachulalongkornrajyavidyalaya, Chiangmai and Manipuri learners of three selected colleges under Manipur University, Manipur.

The present case study does not indulge in individual case or a historical case of development of an organisation or the participants within a
period. It rather focuses on the level of competence of the participants in writing skill and the problems involved in it and also the process followed by them in writing through essay test and questionnaire. Thus, the study intends to probe deeply and analyse the main problems that the students face by analysing their competence in writing through the Essay Test and their response to the questionnaire.

Again, a case study is preferred when the researcher aims to study a contemporary phenomenon in real life and in finding the reason and implications for that phenomenon. With the increasing importance of English in the global scenario, the competence of the Thai learners in English as a Foreign language and Manipuri in English as a Second Language in writing skill needs to be studied and analysed in details so that the findings and recommendation pertaining to the actual level can come up. To add more, this case study will also throw light on the views of students from both an EFL and ESL perspective on the importance of native English and how they assess themselves in comparison to that.

The objectives of the case study cannot be achieved only through qualitative analysis. A quantitative analysis of the students’ response and competence in writing is also essential. A case study, though generally conducted with qualitative research, can also use quantitative method too (Duff, 2008). Thus, the research design is suitable for the study as it takes a
limited number of Thai students of Mahachulaongkronrajyavidyalaya, Chiangmai and Manipuri students of three colleges under Manipur University as the participants of the case study. It also requires the use of questionnaires, interviews and essay writing test as tools for gathering the information. Again, the interview replies are coded, the data are tabulated and mean and average scores are calculated. Hence, the study requires both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.2 Data Collection Procedure

This research examines writing competence of sixty seven (67) Thai students and ninety (90) Manipuri students studying in the first semester of the graduation course and their problems in writing skill and teachers’ perspective on their students’ writing competence and in teaching writing skills. The total number of students is one hundred and fifty seven (157). Random sampling technique is employed in Mahachulalongkornrajyavidyalaya University in Chiangmai, Thailand and in three colleges under Manipur University, Manipur. Random sampling from a finite population enables each sample equal possibility as well as equal probability to be chosen and hence, each sample gets equal chance (Kothari, 2004). Sixty seven questionnaires and written essay tests are collected from 1st year students of Mahachulalongkornrajyavidyalaya University and eight teachers who are teaching English are interviewed. Ninety questionnaires and written essay
tests are collected from three colleges under Manipur University, Manipur and twelve teachers are interviewed. The researcher also has a group discussion with the participants under study by dividing the students into groups and taking down important notes from the discussion to have more understanding of their response in the questionnaires.

3.3 Research Tools

Research tools are the devices used to gather data. Data were gathered using three research tools: questionnaire for the students, interview of teachers teaching English and written test for students. As the purpose of the study is to assess written competence in English as a second language or as a foreign language, a written test is necessary to analyse the level of competence. The questionnaire technique is selected as it is appropriate for gathering information on the students’ views on their difficulty in writing in English as well as the processes they adopt while writing. Interview of teachers is important to find out the reasons for students’ problems in writing skill.

3.3.1 Students’ Questionnaire

Questionnaire is the research tool through which a lot of information can be gathered in a short period of time. It consists of questions or statement that the respondents need to respond. Although, it is considered a tool equivalent to interviews, it is more economical and can be employed in a large
A questionnaire can consist of closed form as well as open form of questions or statements. In closed form, the respondents are given alternative answer to each question and they have to select at least one. On the other hand, in open form, the respondents are allowed to give their own answer without any restrictions. The researcher employs both forms in the questionnaire to gather information and to assess the student’s competence in English.

The students’ Questionnaire is divided into two sections: the first section intends to gather their personal information and second section involves the problems they face while learning writing in English as a second or foreign language. On personal information, information of their campus, gender, age, mother tongue and language known are gathered. In addition to that the period of their studying English at school/ colleges, their purpose of studying English, the medium of instruction in the previous school/ college and their preference for native like competence are also put to know their views. In the second section, the students’ preference of level that they want to achieve, their rating of their writing, their habits of reading, their level of difficulty in writing are asked. This part consists of six open ended questions. In four open-ended questions, the students are given options as well as space to add any other information they can while, ten questions are put to check their competence in English. This section also comprises of questions on the problems they faced while writing in English with options, the grammatical
items that are difficult for them, their way of coping with their lack of knowledge, their ability to understand their error, their assessment of their writing, the things they do while they write and the ways they drive out the meaning of a word or a phrase. The responses of the students are interpreted in terms of frequency and percentage. Thus, it is analysed quantitatively.

3.3.2 Teachers’ Interview

Interview is an effective tool to elicit information of the interviewee’s experience, perceptions, attitude and opinions. In it, the researcher engages in active interaction with the respondents focussing on the study (Lambert, 2012). Perry (2005) differentiates an interview from a questionnaire by stating that in interview the researcher is able to form interpersonal connection with the respondent which cannot be achieved through questionnaire. Through this connection, the researcher can avoid misunderstanding or miscommunication by directly monitoring the respondent and the response. An interview can be highly structured, semi-structured and open structured. In highly structured interviews, the questions are already determined and so, there will be no room for variations. While, in semi-structured one, the researcher has liberty to add questions to probe further. On the other hand, open structured interview allows the researcher to make changes to suit the situations. Although, there are already pre-determined set of questions, there is no limitation to the questions that can be framed in accordance to the situation.
In the study, the researcher has employed open structured form of interviews. Since, teachers teaching in different colleges or universities are interviewed and to add to that belonging to different countries, the researcher is not able to strictly adhere to the set of questions framed initially. Certain modifications are required according to the attitude, culture and experience of the teachers. However, the objective of the interview is fulfilled. During the interview, a recorder is used to record the response of the teacher. But at the same time, the researcher notes down the teacher’s response in separate sheets.

The interview consists of fifteen questions divided into two sections. The first section is on personal details of the teachers. It consists of information on campus, educational qualification, post in the university or colleges, teaching experience and attendance in teachers’ training programme. The second section is regarding the approaches adopted in teaching English and the problems that they faced in teaching writing skills. In this section, questions were also asked on the teachers’ view on their students’ level of competence in writing in English, whether the syllabus prescribed is appropriate or not, their teaching strategies, error committed by their students and suggestions on improving the students’ competence in writing in English. The responses of the teachers are discussed briefly and hence, it is interpreted qualitatively.
3.3.3 Essay Test

To assess the written competence of the learners, the researcher resorts to extensive writing in which the learner can employ various options: vocabulary, grammar and discourse although with some constraints and conditions. An extensive writing can be a full-length essays, term papers, project reports and thesis and dissertations. (Brown, 2004). The researcher chooses essay writing considering time constraints and objective of the research. So, a separate essay test is conducted for the undergraduate students of Mahchulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chiangmai, Thailand and the three colleges under Manipur University. The topics for the essay assessment are chosen taking in consideration of the topics in which the students are comfortable with. The researcher needs at least two to three paragraphs of writing so that the analysis can be carried out appropriately. Thus, for the Thai students, the topic is on ‘Buddhism’ and for the Manipuri students the two topics are given to choose which are “Importance of English in today’s world of Globalisation” and “Importance of Grammar in learning English”. Taking into consideration that most of the Thai students respond their questionnaire in Thai, the researcher chooses the topic “Buddhism” as they were already taught to write in this topic by their teacher. However, the situation is different in the Manipuri context. Manipuri students are already able to write in any given general topic. So, the topics “Importance of English in today’s world of
Globalisation” and “Importance of Grammar in learning English” are chosen where it is expected that the students can put maximum input. The written essays are then analysed through a rubric formulated. The essays are analysed in two ways: in terms of errors and in terms of cohesion and coherence. A separate discussion is also done on the common errors that are found in the essays of the students.

3.4 Data Interpretation

The data collected through questionnaires, interviews and test are analysed quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

3.4.1 Quantitative Interpretation

A separate questionnaire is distributed to the students to respond. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The students are asked to fill in the questionnaire before the commencement of the written essay test. Most of the response of the Thai and Manipuri participants through questionnaire is analysed quantitatively in terms of frequency and percentage using pie charts and tables. In the essay test, the frequency of five types of error, total error, four different sections of the essay and the total score of the test is given in terms of number and percentage. Again, some responses of the teachers are analysed quantitatively.
3.4.2 Qualitative Interpretation

Teachers are interviewed by the researcher using an audio-taped and also their response and comments are written in separate sheets for each of them. The response of the teachers from the selected university and the colleges are analysed qualitatively. A detailed report is written on the responses, comments and suggestion made by the teachers. The common errors found in the essays are also discussed qualitatively.

3.5 Framework for Assessing the Writing Test

Assessment of a learner’s competence is not an easy task where a test is set and score or grade is given. It needs to take into consideration of several factors like setting a test which addresses the need of the students and the teacher or evaluator; serves the purpose of the test and correct evaluation of the test. Assessment should make sure that students are fairly judged. Thus, issues to be considered in assessment according to Hyland, (2003) are purposes of assessment, validity and reliability issues, designing assessment tasks, approaches to scoring, reducing students’ anxiety and portfolio assessments. Assessment is of two types. One is formative to identify learner’s strengths and weaknesses for effective remedial action. The other is summative assessment to sum up how much a student has learned at the end of a course. Designing assessment tasks involve four basic elements which are:
Rubric – instructions for carrying out the writing task

Prompt – the stimulus the student must respond to

Expected response – what the teacher intends students to do with the task

Post-task evaluation – assessing effectiveness of the assessment task

The purposes of assessments or language tests according to Bachman and Palmer (1996) are to come up with findings about language ability and to make decisions based on those findings. Three common inferences that the one who sets the language test must take into account are:

(i) The extent of learning progress at the end of a unit or course or study

(ii) The level of student’s ability which are strengths and weakness of them so that an appropriate instruction is given to meet the needs of the students and

(iii) To assess the competence of the students in general for admission to a program or institution.

The three basic guidelines recommended for writing task instructions by Bachman and Palmer (1996) are that the tasks should be simple so that the students understand it; should be brief not to take much time and also detailed enough to guide the students about the test.
In the writing assessment, an evaluator faces two types of situations: one in which grammatical errors are given much importance over “the strength of ideas and experiences” discussed by the writer and the other in which ideas and arguments are preferred to language errors “that would be seriously damaging in an academic course context” (Hamp-Lyons, 1991: 250). So, a balanced assessment is required that caters to both situation.

Different methods of writing assessment have come up so far, of which the two most prominent ones are holistic and analytic assessment. Holistic scoring “aims to rate a writer’s overall proficiency through an individual impression of the quality of writing sample” (Hyland, 2003: 227). The holistic approach analyses through single impressionistic score by taking all the factors of writing assessment as a whole (White, 1985). In it, a single score is given for the quality of writing which is done wholly subjectively or by referring to a single scoring guide or rubric. It only gives score or ranks but not any feedback or correction (Hamps-Lyons, 1991). One of the standardized test on writing skill in English which follows holistic evaluation scores is Test for Written English (TWE). It is a standardized test of writing ability in English and its validity is supported by a number of research articles. In 1998, it was incorporated into the standardized computer based- TOEFL. TWE is a timed impromptu test in which 30 minutes is allotted for the selected topic (Brown, 2004)
Table 3.1: Test of Written English Scoring Guide (Brown, 2004: 239).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Demonstrate clear competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it may have occasional errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A paper in this category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Effectively addresses the writing task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is well organised and well developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses clearly appropriate details to support a thesis or illustrate ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Displays consistent facility in the use of language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate syntactic variety and appropriate word choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Demonstrate competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels, though it will probably have occasional errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A paper in this category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May address some parts of the task more effectively than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is generally well organized and developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses details to support a thesis or illustrate an idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Displays facility in the use of language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate some syntactic variety and range of vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Demonstrate minimal competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A paper in this category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Addresses the writing topic adequately but may slight parts of the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is adequately organized and developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses some details to support a thesis or illustrate an idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate adequate but possibly inconsistent facility with syntax and usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• May contain some errors that occasionally obscure meaning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3  Demonstrate some developing competence in writing, but it remains flawed on either the rhetorical or syntactic level, or both

A paper in this category may reveal one or more of the following weaknesses:

- Inadequate organization or development.
- Inappropriate or insufficient details to support or illustrate generalizations.
- A noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms.
- An accumulation of errors in sentence structure or usage.

2  Suggests incompetence in writing.

A paper in this category is seriously flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:

- Serious disorganization or underdevelopment
- Little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics
- Serious and frequent errors in sentence structure or usage.
- Serious problems with focus

1  Demonstrate incompetence in writing

A paper in this category

- May be incoherent
- May be underdeveloped
- May contain severe and persistent writing errors.

0  A paper is rated 0 if it contains no response, merely copies the topic, is off-topic, is written in a foreign language or consists only of keystroke characters.

Score of the essay is the mean of the two independent ratings. It means two trained readers who are working independently score each essay. The score ranges from 1 to 6. Even half-point score like 4.5, 3.5, and so on can be given. If there is any discrepancy, a third resolves can resolve the difference.
Holistic scoring has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of holistic scoring according to Brown (2004) are that it leads to fast evaluation; the inter-rater reliability is relatively high; the writer’s strength is emphasised (Cohen, 1994) and it is applicable in different disciplines. However, it also has its disadvantages which are that the sub-skills are masked by the one score of the whole; no diagnostic remedies are given; it may be applicable for all genres of writing and there is need for raters who are extensively trained in using the scale accurately.

Unlike holistic scoring, under analytic scoring the text or the written document is not analysed as a whole. In Hyland’s (2003) words:

Analytic scoring more clearly defines the features to be assessed and sometimes weighting, individual components and is therefore more effective in discriminating between weaker texts. Widely used rubrics have separate scales for context, organisation and grammar with vocabulary (229).

An analytical scoring scale was developed by Brown and Bailey (1984) in which the scale ranges from “unacceptable” to “excellent” and there are five major categories with five different levels. This scoring offer more and it deals with more areas than holistic scoring.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.2: Analytic scale for rating composition tasks (Brown &amp; Bailey, 1984, 39-41)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excellent to Good</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Organization: Introduction, Body and Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Logical development of ideas: Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Punctuation, spelling and mechanics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Style and quality of expression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marks allotted to each section in the above table are: Content – 30; Organization – 20, Vocabulary – 20; Syntax – 25 and Mechanics – 5 and hence, the total is 100.

Analytic scoring drives out the sections where improvement is required which is not there in the holistic scoring.
3.5.1 Cohesion and Coherence

The generalised assumption that written language is the graphic representation of a spoken language does not hold true today. The competences required for writing skill are much different from that of a speaking skill. Written form follows a unique rhetorical convention. Writing skill required to generate ideas, to arrange those ideas coherently and to form a cohesive discourse using discourse marks, rhetorical conventions, appropriate grammar etc., (Brown, 2004).

Communicative competence is often perceived by EFL or ESL teachers to be comprised of only grammatical and socio linguistic competence. So, while analysing a written text, grammar is given utmost preference. However, this led to a situation in which many learners even after writing grammatically accurate text, fail to have cohesion and coherence in their writing as it seems to lack either collocations or sentence wording. Here, the term ‘text’ is understood the way Halliday & Hasan (1976) defined as “any passage spoken or written of whatever length that forms a unified whole” (29). This definition covers both texts created by several sentences and texts consisting of a single sentence (Nunan, 1993) Thus, according to Nunan (1993), the two central elements of discourse are coherence and cohesion

A text which is coherent literally means that sentences or utterances and larger passages seem to ‘hang together’ so that they appear to be meaning
in a context. Apart from understanding the grammar and vocabulary of the text, we need to know how the sentences relate to each other. The interpretation of a text which is coherent depends largely on the text-forming devices such as ordering sentences or paragraphs and the use of words with certain references. (20)

By cohesion, we mean the grammatical and lexical elements on the surface of a text and their relationship that make it meaningful and appropriate. Coherence is rather the outcome of the dialogue of that text. While cohesion is the property of the text, coherence is the communicators’ evaluation of the text. Halliday & Hasan (1976) identified five different types of cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion.

Halliday (1985) has altered this list and reduced it to four categories as substitution is being seen as a sub-category of ellipsis (cited in Nunan, 1993). According to him, the interpretation of a sentence or a clause is done by reference to some other sources and “this essentially relational nature of the implicit encoding devices endows them with the possibility of functioning as a COHESIVE DEVICE” (75). Again, the source for the interpretation is either co-textual which is “the language accompanying the linguistic unit under focus” (76) or purely contextual which is “the context — relevant to the total text” (76). Nunan describes referential cohesion as words in the text which point backwards (anaphoric, i.e. following its linguistic referent) as well as
forward (cataphoric, i.e. preceding its linguistic referent) to the source of interpretation.

Reference could be for example the use of personal pronouns. Eg John is my friend. He is a good man. Demonstrative reference is expressed through determiners which represent single words, phrase or longer chunks. Eg, The teacher explains the problem in detail. This helps the students in getting the answer quickly. Substitution refers to words within the text that can be substituted to avoid repetitions. E.g., He has bought some books for you. You have already read those ones. Ellipsis occurs when an essential structural element is omitted from a phrase and can only be recovered by referring to an element in the preceding text. Conjunction differs from the other cohesive devices. It does not remind the reader of previously mentioned entities or actions. It can be adversative (however, but, on the other hand), additive (in addition to, according to, and) and causal (because, due, to).

The summary of cohesive devices given by Halliday (1985) is as follows:
Table 3.3: Summary of cohesive devices (Halliday, 1985: 82)

**NON-STRUCTURAL COHESION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Componental Relations</th>
<th>Organic Relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Device</strong></td>
<td><strong>Typical tie relation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A: Reference</strong></td>
<td>Co-reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Pronominals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Demonstratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Definite article</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Comparatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B: Substitution &amp; Ellipsis</strong></td>
<td>Co-classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Nominal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Verbal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Clausal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. General</strong></td>
<td>Co-classification or co-extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Repetition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Synonymy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Antonymy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Meronymy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Instantial</strong></td>
<td>Co-reference or co-classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Equivalence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Naming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Semblance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STRUCTURAL COHESION**

**A: Parallelism**

**B: Theme-Rheme Development**

**C: Given- New Organisation**
In the above table, synonymy is the use of two lexical words that are identical, for example, “woman and lady”. On the other hand, antonymy means the opposite in which the words have opposite meaning, for example, “silver and golden”. Meronymy is the term given to the words that refer to a part-whole relation, such as, “tree, limb and root”. By repetition, it means the repetition of same lexical words or unit in a sentence or a paragraph or a text (Haliday, 1985: 80-81). Again, it is true that grammatical cohesion is not possible without lexical cohesion and the same goes for lexical cohesion.

According to McCarthy (1997), the grammatical links which is cohesion in a written discourse can be classified under three broad types: reference, ellipsis/substitution and conjunction. Reference includes pronouns (he, she, it), demonstratives (this, that, those) and the definite article ‘the’ and also phrase like ‘such as’. Ellipsis is the omission of parts which the speaker considers obvious form the context and therefore, left it out even if required by the grammar. Ellipsis can be nominal, verbal and clausal. Conjunction can be considered as a discourse marker. The role of a conjunction in creating a coherent discourse differs from language to language. In English, it can be used as a single-word conjunction (and, or), phrasal conjunction (as a consequence, as a result, because of) and again it can act as nominal as well as a lexical item within the predicate of the clause. Depending on contextual information, conjunction can be divided into four categories:-
Various studies on cohesion and coherence in writing skill have been carried out so far. The findings mostly indicate the lack of coherence and misuse of cohesive devices by the ESL or EFL speakers. A brief review of some of the studies is given below:

Bickner and Peyasantiwong (1988 cited in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) conduct an investigation to find out the rhetorical contrasts between English and Thai by asking them to write on the same topic. They come up with five characteristics of possible coherence expressions and problems which are as using more repetition, making extensive use of lists, not making conclusions, impersonal style and lack of consideration or counter factual. Students are found to use certain English vocabulary repeatedly. Students also try to link their contexts or display the parallel English vocabulary and cite some examples through additive conjunction ‘and’ and the apposition link phrase ‘such as’. Most of the students do not write conclusion and besides add their other points of views in the end. The casual conjunction or the consequences link words like ‘hence’, ‘therefore’ and ‘in conclusion’ are generally not used.
The students generally ignore the use of substitution and ellipsis in their essays. Again, they do not clearly make a hypothesis in their essays.

The lack of coherence in writing exhibited by the students is encountered by Jones (2007) in an undergraduate 1st semester course on Academic English in one of Australian Universities. The research discusses the inability of students to construct a coherent argument to a given question. From the analysis of the samples of students’ writing reveals that native and non-native English speaking students were sometimes indistinguishable in their quality of writing as both display a loss of coherence and relevance in argument. They lack coherent argument and rhetorical organisation.

Rahman (2013) examines the Omani student-teachers’ command in using the cohesive devices and how they differ from the native English speakers in their use of cohesive devices in descriptive English writing. Halliday and Hassan’s (1976) framework is used as the model for the analysis of the essays. The collected data is analysed qualitatively identifying the number and types of cohesive devices used by the two groups (Omani student-teachers and native English speakers). Result shows that there is a notable difference between the natives’ and Omani student-teachers’ use of cohesive devices in terms of frequency, variety and control. The natives are found to have maintained a balance between the use and frequency of various types of cohesive devices while the Omani students make over-use of some cohesive
forms (repetition and reference) and do not use other devices at all. Thus, they exhibit lack of competence in their use of cohesive devices and limited knowledge of vocabulary. They even use the few cohesive devices inaccurately. Misuse of cohesive devices is frequent and hence, their writings are incomprehensible. To add to this, the Omani students mainly focus on the word and sentence level. They ignore the links between the sentences and the paragraphs. Thus, there is the absence of connectedness which makes the flow of thoughts meaningful and clear for readers.

Saud (2015), in the study of cohesion in the descriptive writing of EFL undergraduates, identifies the frequency of cohesive devices in the descriptive compositions of third-year English major students of King Khalid University. Analytic scoring with scale from 0 to 10 is employed and the variables are content, cohesion, coherence, vocabulary and grammar. Halliday and Hassan’s (1976) model is used for the analysis of the cohesive features in the students’ writing. It has been found that the most frequently used cohesive devices are reference, conjunction, lexical substitution while the least frequent cohesive device used is ellipsis. The more competent students used more cohesive devices in their writings than the less competent students.

Mohamed & Mudawi (2015) investigate the effectiveness of using cohesive devices and writing strategies in developing EFL learners’ writing skills. The study is carried out on 100 first year students who are studying
English at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The data is collected by conducting a test on the students and questionnaires for teachers. The students are divided into two groups: experimental group and control group. The control group is taught how to use the cohesive devices in writing while it is not so in case of the experimental group. The result of the test shows that the control group perform slightly better than the experimental group. Again, according to the teachers, there is lack of effectiveness in using cohesive devices in English writing skill.

3.5.2 Error Analysis

According to Corder (1967), the term ‘error’ refers to “the systematic errors of the learners from which we are able to reconstruct his knowledge of the language to date i.e. his transitional competence” (167). He points out that errors made by learners are very significant as these are the indicators of how learners are acquiring or learning a language. He cites that when a child is learning/acquiring his first language, if he commits error, (“incorrect utterance” 165), it is not considered an error. It is simple evidence that the child is in the process of acquiring the language. Similarly, learner’s committing an error in the second language shows that he is in the process of acquiring the language. Thus, errors made by the learners are evidences of learners’ progress in the language and these should not be taken negatively.
Error is helpful to the teacher, the researcher and also to the students. Corder (1967) explains this in the following way:

They are significant in three different ways. First to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards that goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly (and in a sense this is their most important aspect) they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn (167).

Corder (1982) believes that learning of mother tongue “is a part of the whole maturational process of the child, while learning a second language normally begins only after the maturational process is largely complete” (6). For him (1982), the two functions of error analysis are to find the means to describe the learner’s knowledge of the target language at any particular moment of his learning career and to provide remedial action to cope up with the error. Error or correction can be applied only when the target respondent is assumed to learn and have known the rules of the target language but also fail in writing the language correctly. An utterance or a written speech is either acceptable or unacceptable. An acceptable utterance is the one produced in an
appropriate situation and accepted by the native speaker. However, acceptability of the sentence alone is not enough. It should be appropriate to the context and the situation in which it occurs. The appropriateness should be referential appropriateness and social appropriateness. Referential appropriate is judged by “material truth value of the utterance” (40) and social appropriateness is “the selection of the appropriate style or register of language for the social situation” (41).

Corder (1982) opines that one of the reasons for error is the influence of the mother tongue on the learning process. Carrying one’s habits of mother tongue in learning or writing or uttering a second language is called interference. Many learners try to find similar forms of the target language with their mother tongue. It is assumed that learner’s errors are systematic and this assumption leads to another assumption that the learner has formed his own more or less personal grammar. So, they tend to commit error when they speak and write.

**Interlanguage**

The learners’ version of the target language is termed “interlanguage by Selinker in 1972” (*Ibid*, 66). It is a language system which is in-between the two languages which are the mother tongue of the learner and the target language as it shows some characteristics of both the language. The interlanguage is also employed by the teachers who are not native speakers
and hence, their performance is not consistent with the target language. A
native speaker has communicative competence to know when it is appropriate
to use reduced or simplified register. However, a second language learner
lacks this competence. Hence, when a learner learns a second language, he has
already acquired the basic system of his mother tongue which is the repertoire
of basic syntactic relations and categories along with reduced registers of his
mother tongue and “fossilized approximate systems in other languages” (Ibid, 85)

Selinker (1972) employed the term ‘fossilization’ referring to the
tendency of many learners to stop developing their interlanguage grammar in
the direction of the target language. According to him, there are five
fossilization processes in which some rules and sub-systems are formed in the
interlanguage because of:

(i) **Language Transfer**: transfer from the first language.

(ii) **Transfer of Training**: specific features of the training process
used in teaching the second language

(iii) **Strategies of Second Language Learning**: specific approach to
the material to be learned.

(iv) **Strategies of Second Language Communication**: specific ways
people learn to communicate with native speakers of the target
language.
Richards (1971), in his study, involved learners from different language background and came up with different types of errors based on production and distribution of verb groups, prepositions, articles and the use of questions. Based on this, he distinguished three sources of errors:

(i) **Interference errors**: These errors result from the use of elements from one language while speaking or writing another language.

(ii) **Intralingual errors**: These errors showed general characteristics of language learning rules such as faulty generalisation, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply. These can be subdivided into:

(a) Over-generalisation errors due to the creation of a deviant structure on the basis of other structure in the target language.

(b) Ignorance of rules restrictions in which learners apply inapplicable rules in a context.

(c) Incomplete application of rules due to failure to use a fully developed structure.

(d) False hypothesis due to learners’ failure to understand a distinction in the target language.
(iii) **Developmental error:** In it, learners attempt to develop a hypothesis about the target language on the basis of limited experiences.

Later on, Richards (1974) classified errors into two categories which are interlingual errors and intralingual and developmental errors (cited in Heydari & Bagheri, 2012)

Lastly, mention can be made of James (1998) who comes up with different types of learners' errors which are omission, over inclusion, mis-selection (use wrong words not wrong forms), mis-ordering, blends (blending arises when two alternative grammatical forms are combined to produce an ungrammatical blend). He states four causes of error based on his findings which are:

(i) **Interlingual errors or Mother-tongue influence due to interference by the first language in learning the target language.**

(ii) **Intralingual errors are caused by the target language itself.** These are due to false analogy, misanalysis (learners form a wrong hypothesis about the target language), application of incomplete rules, exploiting redundancy (unnecessary morphology and double signalling), overlooking co-occurrence restrictions (overlooking the exceptional rules), hypercorrection or monitor
overuse (learners’ over cautious and strict observance of the rules), Overgeneralization or system-simplification (misuse of words or grammatical rules),

(iii) Communication strategy-based errors which are subdivided into the holistic strategies or approximation and analytic strategies or circumlocution, and

(iv) Induced Errors are the results of being misled by the way definitions, examples, explanations and arrange practice opportunities are given by teachers.

Several studies have been conducted on errors in ESL and EFL, the sources and suggestions. The errors found on these studies are similar. The incomplete knowledge of the target language and the interference of the mother tongue are mostly detected in the studies. A brief review of the studies is given below:

Sattayatham and Honsa (2007), conducted an error analysis of first year medical students from the four medical schools at Mahidol University. The students were asked to translate sentences from Thai into English. The data collected from the sentence-level translation were analyzed to come up with the most frequent errors of these medical students. The major errors found in their writings were in order of adjectives, subject-verb agreement, direct/indirect object, verbs of feeling, tense (particularly, past tense, present
perfect), reported speech, passive voice, and question tag. Further, the researchers maintained that the errors made by the students were both from the intralanguage and interlanguage interference.

Subramaniam (2009) examined errors in the essays of 72 Form Four Malay students who were studying at secondary level. For the error analysis, Markin software was utilised. Through this, error statistics are automatically compiled and included at the end of the text. According to the study, the most common errors are:-

(i) **Singular and plural form:** In Malay language, there is no plural marker for a noun. So, some of the students did not put the suffix ‘s’ in the plural forms of nouns.

(ii) **Tense:** The knowledge of the students regarding tense is incomplete and thus, they applied the rules of tense inadequately.

(iii) **Word-choice:** The students lack knowledge of appropriate vocabulary and so, they use inappropriate word.

(iv) **Preposition:** They showed confusion in the use of preposition.

(v) **Subject-Verb Agreement:** The subject-verb agreement was generally not maintained in the essays.

(vi) Again, there were problems in sentence construction. The students could not form simple as well as complex sentences.
Ulla (2014) conducted an analysis of the language errors in writing in the composition of the English major students of 1st semester of Father Saturnino Urios University, Butuan City. It highlighted that errors in writing could affect not just the form but communication as well. The most common errors committed by the students are in terms of pronoun-antecedent agreement and misuse of punctuation marks. These were followed by other errors which are misuse or omission of verb, spelling error and misuse or omission of conjunction. Errors are due to the inability or failure of the learners to master the second language. The study drives home the need to implement the action plan that was designed to address the language problem. The propose action plan is an intensive summer course on grammar and composition every year.

Ngangbam (2016), in her case study of analysis of syntactic errors committed by students of English Language class in the writing composition of Mutah University classified fifteen categories of errors to find out the causes of syntactic error. The study tried to find out the more frequent errors, area of weakness and problems that occur in writing composition. The major errors are mother-tongue interference as the students translates Arabic words directly into English; failure in separating meaningful sentence, developmental errors and overuse of the target grammatical rules.

Sermsook & et al. (2017) analyse the errors committed in English sentences by Thai EFL English major students into two levels: sentential level
and word level. Sentential level comprises of fragments, subject-verb agreement, word order, tenses, capitalisation and punctuation. The word levels are articles, prepositions, word choices, noun, pronouns and verbs. They employed questionnaire and interview methods. In the analysis of the data, seventeen types of errors were detected in English sentences written by the Thai EFL students. The errors at the sentential level are punctuation, subject-verb agreement, capitalisation, fragments, tenses and word order. Again, the errors at the word level were articles, nouns, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, adjectives, literal translation form the Thai language, parts of speech, word choices, spelling and transition words. The sources of the errors were interlingual interference, intralingual interference, limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary and carelessness of the students. Properly-prepared grammar and vocabulary lessons were suggested. The teachers should make sure that there were no negative transfers from the mother tongue of the students.

3.5.3 Collocation in English

In spite of having enough grammatical competence in English, students of ESL and EFL are not able to convey what they intend to say in English and their expressions seem not appropriate. It is because of their lack of knowledge in collocation. They lack knowledge of how words are paired or clustered in English and they combine words that are not actually used in English. For instance, we have the phrases, ‘remain calm’ and ‘stay calm’ in
English but not ‘linger calm’ or ‘keep calm’. Collocation in error is committed by most of the ESL and EFL students because of their lack of enough exposure.

The concept of collocation in a language started from Firth who defined collocation as “words in habitual company” (1957: 183 cited in Sadeghi & Panahifer, 2013: 54). According to Halliday and Hasan (2001), collocation is a means of cohesion in which the words occur together in similar environment and there is association among them (cited in Duan & Xiaohui, 2012). For Duan & Xiaohui (2012), collocation “refers to the frequent co-occurrence and mutual expectation of some words which appear more often than by chance” (1891) and it is between free combination and idiom. The knowledge of collocation can be acquired through exposure to the language. The error in collocation can be grammatical or lexical (Benson et al, 1997). Grammatical collocations are the associations of nouns, verbs and adjectives with restricted preposition or grammatical structures e.g. ‘stand against’, ‘get over’, ‘look into’ and so on. Lexical collocations are the combinations of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adjectives e.g. ‘tell a story’, ‘young girl’, ‘very charming’.

Learners of a second or a foreign language need to know how to use the language like the natives and that needs knowledge of the vast collocations and idioms. Sadeghi & Panahifar (2013), in their study, focus on the use of
different types of collocations in oral productions of 30 intermediate Iranian EFL learners and identify and categorise the inappropriate collocations produced. The errors in collocation are categorised into seven distinct patterns which are verb-preposition, noun-preposition, adjective-preposition, verb-noun, adjective-noun, adverb-adjective and verb-adverb. The most frequent problem in collocation is in preposition. Others are in the wrong choice of verb and adjective. They have knowledge of vocabulary but lack the knowledge of collocations of the vocabulary. The reason for this is the language teachers’ tendency to teach words in isolation rather than as parts of their Collocational patterns.

Duan & Xiaohui (2012) defines collocation as a kind of syntagmatic relation. They analyse the errors in collocation of the Chinese students and find out that these are mainly caused by L1 interference and over-generalisation. The students just translate the collocations of their mother tongue into English literally which is inappropriate in English. Again, they generalise the use of a particular word in a right collocation to make wrong collocations. The researchers, therefore, emphasise the importance of knowledge of collocation so that the student can make correct and idiomatic use of words in English. They also point out the importance of both teacher and students to pay more attention to collocation. To add to these, the students are suggested to consult Collocational dictionaries and the resources in internet to make sure that their arrangement is collocationally correct.
The lack of emphasis on teaching collocations in English is pointed by Shammas (2013) who assesses Arab M.A. students’ comprehension and use of collocation at four Arab universities. The study employs three questionnaires: translation of collocational words from Arabic into English, from English into Arabic and choosing the right collocator from the given options. It has been found that all the students exhibit low competence. The students exhibit lack of knowledge of collocations and consciousness of the role of collocation in getting the meaning through. Again, the shortage of Arabic- English and English- Arabic dictionaries is highlighted.

3.5.4 Rubrics

Based on the discussion done in writing assessment, cohesion and coherence and error analysis, two rubrics are formulated for the analysis of the essays of the students. A well formed rubric should clearly state what each scale means (Perry, 2005). So, the rubrics clearly state the scale of the analysed items and what it means. The first rubric is about the problems in writing or the errors committed by the students. The problems or errors are divided as: spelling error, grammatical error, and inappropriate use of phrase, incomplete sentences and unorganised arrangement of ideas. Here, grammatical error is considered in terms of subject-verb agreement, determiners, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunction and preposition. These are rated in five different categories: most frequently, frequently, moderate, limited and absent with the scores - 4, 3, 2, 1and 0 respectively.
Table 3.4: Rubric 1: Problems in Writing in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem in Writing</th>
<th>Most Frequently</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling Error</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Error</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate Sentences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete Sentences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unorganised Arrangement of Ideas</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second rubric, the essay is divided into four different sections: introduction, body, conclusion and overall accuracy & cohesion and coherence. The introduction is scored by probing if it is effective and engaging. Again, the body of the essay is divided into two sections where it is assessed whether there is coherence to the introduction and it provides appropriate examples and details. In the conclusion, it is analysed if the essay ends in a logical manner. In the section, overall cohesion & accuracy, it is examined if there is cohesion in the whole presentation while in overall coherence, the coherent arrangement of the sentences and paragraphs are investigated. These sections are rated as complete, extensive, moderate, limited and absent with the scores – 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively.
Table 3.5: Rubric 2: Analysis of the Essay Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Complete</th>
<th>Extensive</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The introduction is effective and engaging</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Body</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) There is coherence to the introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Provides appropriate examples and details</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Conclusion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close the essay in a logical manner</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Overall Cohesion &amp; Accuracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) There is cohesion in the whole presentation.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Coherence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) The sentences and paragraphs are arranged in coherence.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table, Complete = All Features Present; Extensive = Most Features Present; Moderate = Some Features Present; Limited = A few Features Present; Absent = No Features Present