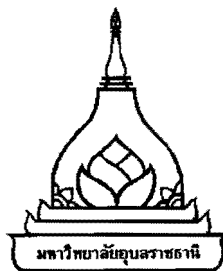


**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ADVANCED LEARNERS' VOICE
IN ACADEMIC WRITING: A CASE OF DISCUSSION SECTIONS
IN MASTER'S THESES**

CHANANYU BOONCHAROEN

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
MAJOR IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS
UBON RATCHATHANI UNIVERSITY
YEAR 2012
COPYRIGHT OF UBON RATCHATHANI UNIVERSITY**



INDEPENDENT STUDY APPROVAL
UBON RATCHATHANI UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF ARTS
MAJOR IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS

TITLE A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ADVANCED LEARNERS' VOICE IN
ACADEMIC WRITING: A CASE OF DISCUSSION SECTIONS IN
MASTER'S THESES

NAME MR. CHANANYU BOONCHAROEN

THIS INDEPENDENT STUDY HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY

..... *S. Alexander* CHAIR
(DR. SAOWANEE T. ALEXANDER)

..... *Jiraporn Meechai* COMMITTEE
(DR. JIRAPORN MEECHAI)

..... *Pilanut Phusawisot* COMMITTEE
(DR. PILANUT PHUSAWISOT)

..... *Kanokwan* DEAN
(ASST. PROF. DR. KANOKWAN MANOROM)

APPROVED BY UBON RATCHATHANI UNIVERSITY

..... *Utith Inprasit*
(ASSOC. PROF. DR. UTITH INPRASIT)

VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

FOR THE PRESIDENT OF UBON RATCHATHANI UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC YEAR 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to a number of people for their assistance and support for the completion of this study.

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Saowanee T. Alexander, my advisor, who contributed her time to encourage me in conducting the research. She also dedicated her time to giving me suggestions and re-checking my report thoroughly. I would like to express my gratefulness to Dr. Jiraporn Smyth for recommendations on software and helpful academic papers to strengthen my literature review. I would like to thank Dr. Ram Prasarnsak for giving me guidance and advice to my proposal. I also would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Pilanut Phusawisot for a long journey from Mahasarakham University for valuable comments and suggestions.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my inner ambition for encouraging me to keep walking.

Chananyu B.

(Mr. Chananyu Booncharoen)

Researcher

บทคัดย่อ

ชื่อเรื่อง : การศึกษาเชิงเปรียบเทียบการแสดงอัตลักษณ์ในการเขียนทางวิชาการ :
กรณีศึกษาบทอภิปรายผลในวิทยานิพนธ์

โดย : ชนัญญู บุรณ์เจริญ

ชื่อปริญญา : ศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

สาขาวิชา : การสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

ประธานกรรมการที่ปรึกษา : คร.เสาวนีย์ ศรีรัตน์ อเล็กซานเดอร์

ศัพท์สำคัญ : การกล่าวถึงตนเอง การเขียนทางวิชาการ การเขียนโดยใช้ภาษาที่สอง

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการกล่าวถึงตนเองในการเขียนบทอภิปรายผลในวิทยานิพนธ์ของนักศึกษาระดับมหาบัณฑิตในประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกาและนักศึกษาไทยซึ่งใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ เพื่อเปรียบเทียบลักษณะความเหมือนและความแตกต่างของทั้งสองกลุ่มตัวอย่างในการใช้คำกล่าวถึงตนเอง

กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ศึกษาประกอบด้วยวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับมหาบัณฑิตของมหาวิทยาลัยในสหรัฐอเมริกาและประเทศไทย ระหว่าง พ.ศ. 2551 – 2554 แยกเป็นกลุ่มละ 10 เล่ม โดยทำการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้โปรแกรม WordPilot 2000 เพื่อหาคำที่ใช้กล่าวถึงตัวผู้เขียนที่ปรากฏในการเขียน ดังนี้ต่อไปนี้ 1) คำสรรพนาม *I, we, me, us* 2) คำแสดงความเป็นเจ้าของที่ใช้หน้าหน้านาม *my, our* และ 3) คำสรรพนามแสดงความเป็นเจ้าของ *mine, ours*

ผลการศึกษาพบว่างานเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ของนักศึกษาในมหาวิทยาลัยของประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกามีการใช้คำที่ใช้กล่าวถึงตัวผู้เขียนมากกว่างานเขียนของนักศึกษาในประเทศไทย ถึงแม้ว่าพบการใช้คำที่ใช้กล่าวถึงตัวผู้เขียนในการเขียนของนักศึกษาไทย แต่ประเภทคำและความถี่ในการใช้มีจำนวนต่ำกว่าที่พบในวิทยานิพนธ์ในอเมริกา

ABSTRACT

TITLE : A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ADVANCED LEARNERS' VOICE
IN ACADEMIC WRITING: A CASE OF DISCUSSION SECTIONS
IN MASTER'S THESES
BY : CHANANYU BOONCHAROEN
DEGREE : MASTER OF ARTS
MAJOR : TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
CHAIR : SAOWANEE T. ALEXANDER, Ph.D.

KEYWORDS : SELF-MENTION / ACADEMIC WRITING /
SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING

The aim of the study was to investigate the extent to which American-educated writers and Thai EFL writers mention themselves in writing discussion sections of their master's theses. It sought to identify differences and similarities in their use of self-mentioning devices in academic writing

Ten American English speakers' master's theses (NS) and ten Thai EFL speakers' master's theses in the area of applied linguistics written between 2008 and 2011 were randomly selected as the data sources. The corpuses were scanned by computer software for the following self-mentioning devices: 1) personal pronouns *I*, *we*, *me*, and *us* and 2) possessive determiners *my* and *you*, and 3) possessive pronouns *mine* and *ours*.

The findings showed that in terms of frequency, the writers in the United States used more self-mentioning devices than their Thai counterparts. Despite the presence of self-mentioning devices in the Thai theses, the numbers of types and tokens of these devices are much smaller than those found in the American corpus.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	I
THAI ABSTRACT	II
ENGLISH ABSTRACT	III
CONTENTS	IV
LIST OF TABLES	VI
LIST OF FIGURES	VII
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Rationale	1
1.2 Purpose and significance of the study	4
1.3 Scope and limitations of the study	4
1.4 Definitions of key terms	4
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Expressing stance in academic writing	6
2.2 Self-mention	6
2.3 Stance and English L2 learners: relevant previous studies	9
3 METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Sources of data	13
3.2 Procedures	14
3.3 Data analysis	14
4 FINDINGS	
4.1 Overview of the Corpus	16
4.2 Findings	17

CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

	PAGE
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	
5.1 Discussions	26
5.2 Similarities and differences of self-mentioning in the two corpuses	26
5.3 Conclusion	30
5.4 Limitations of the study	31
5.5 Recommendations for further study	32
REFERENCES	33
APPENDICES	
A Frequency Distribution of Self-mentioning Pronouns in the American Theses	37
B Frequency Distribution of Self-mentioning Pronouns in the Thai Theses	40
C Frequency Distribution of Self-mentioning Pronouns in the American Theses	42
D Frequency Distribution of Self-mentioning Pronouns in the Thai Theses	44
E Samples of discussion sections of American master's thesis	46
VITAE	56

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
4.1	Characteristics of American and Thai master’s theses	17
4.2	Frequency Distribution of Self-mentioning Pronouns in the American Theses	18
4.3	Frequency Distribution of Self-mentioning Pronouns in the Thai Theses	19

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
4.1	Functions of self-mentioning devices in the American corpus	20
4.2	Functions of self-mentioning devices in the Thai corpus	21

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The chapter consists of the rationale, research question, purposes, significance, scope and limitations of the study. Definitions of key terms are also provided.

1.1 Rationale

Writing a thesis is considered a very important type of academic writing. It has been a growing trend that non-native speakers in countries where English is not spoken as the first language write their theses in English given its widespread role as a medium of advanced education especially at the master's degree level. Because a thesis is a product of direct research, writing them can be a challenge for novice researchers such as master's students. The reason is that one important goal of a thesis is to demonstrate the students' knowledge of research methodology and critical thinking through writing. They are expected to be proficient in presenting their own ideas. For non-native speakers such as learners of English as a foreign language, positioning oneself through writing can be a daunting task. Not only do many learners have to deal with grammatical challenges, they are also faced with academically oriented issues. This is the main reason which motivates the study.

In particular, the study focuses on adult learners of English who are English language practitioners enrolled in master's programs in applied linguistics in Thailand. These individuals are ideal for this study as they have a dual status: a language learner and a novice academic writer. The study focuses on analyzing the discussion sections in their master's theses. The discussion sections involve interpretation of the data and results; therefore, the researchers are well afforded with the opportunity to express their take or stance about the results.

A preliminary survey of relevant literature shows that three major issues have been discussed with respect to EFL learners as novice writers. The first issue has

to do with a traditional view towards the notion of self-representation in academic writing. The second is concerned with learners as novice writers and the third, linguistic means of self-representation.

1.1.1 Traditional view of self-representation in academic writing:

“voice”

The term “voice” is employed by several researchers to indicate the writer’s self-representation. According to Draper (1983), voice can be considered the writers’ attitude toward the readers and the subject or object being written about. Traditional academic writing discourages presenting the writer’s ‘self-voice’. Research has shown that English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners tend to avoid presenting their self-representation in the texts (Hyland, 2002). Likewise, Alagozlu (2007) reported that while writing academic papers, some learners just copy excerpts from texts without any elaboration. They simply take quotes or ideas from others without overtly expressing their opinions about those sentences (Alagozlu, 2007). Doing this does not support self-representation. To further complicate this matter, several textbooks and writers, for instance, Lester (1993), Spencer and Arbon (1996), and Arnaudet and Barrette (1984) recommend the students to avoid using expression of self, such as those in the form of first person pronouns and possessive determiners. Take the following quotes as examples.

“Write your paper with a third person voice that avoids ‘I believe’ or ‘It is my opinion’” (Lester, 1993: 144).

“Traditional formal writing does not use ‘I’ or ‘we’ in the body of the paper.” (Spencer & Arbon, 1996: 26).

“In general, academic writing aims at being ‘objective’ in its expression of ideas and thus tries to avoid specific reference to personal opinions. Your academic writing should eliminate first person pronouns...” (Arnaudet & Barrette, 1984: 73).

When I was an undergraduate student, an instructor said that there was no place for personal pronouns in academic writing because it was considered non-academic for writers to use first person pronouns in their writing. As a result, the idea of preventing using personal pronouns in academic writing seems to be a common practice among novice academic writers. Therefore, it is uncommon to their personal

presentation through writing. It would be interesting to compare NS or even novice academic writers educated in the environment where English is an ambient language and EFL writers as their academic and linguistic inputs are not of the same intensity.

1.1.2 Being a novice writer

Being novice is one crucial issue in academic writing. Novice or inexperienced writers usually regard their status as new-comers in the academic arena. Hyland (2002) observed that while novice writers' use of first person pronouns and their corresponding determiners is a powerful strategy to emphasize a contribution to the field, many writers feel uncomfortable using them because of the sense of authority that these linguistic devices carry. Similarly, Barnawi (2011) conducted research in Saudi Arabia with a group of EFL student writers in attempting to propose some pedagogical tasks namely: persuasive writing tasks, draft workshops one-on-one mentoring approaches for finding a place for critical thinking and self-voice in EFL classrooms. Barnawi (2011) added that most college students suffer from weakness in expressing their original ideas or thought in writing. The finding suggested that the student writers who participated in the study of Barnawi (2011) also have problems with constructing arguments, making claims supported with reasons and evidence from the texts they read. As a result, they tend to write or copy what they have read instead of placing their own judgment.

1.1.3 Contrasting views on self-representation in academic writing: A confusion to learners?

Whether writers should use personal pronouns in academic writing is debatable. Several textbooks and writers discourage the use of personal pronouns in academic writing while others encourage the students to express their own voice through the use of personal pronouns. These researchers claim that academics are supposed to be able to demonstrate their own ideas and critique others'. Take the following quotes as examples.

“Do not be afraid to name the agent of the action in a sentence, even when it is ‘I’ or ‘we’”. (Day, 1994: 166)

“...most of our recommendations are designed to help you maintain a scholarly and objective tone in your writing. This does not mean that you should

never use ‘I’ or ‘we’ in your writing. The use of ‘I’ or ‘we’ does not make a piece of writing informal”. (Swales and Feak, 1994: 20)

The different takes on first person pronouns in academic writing leads to the study which investigated personal pronouns and possessive determiners in writing discussion sections review in American and Thai Master’s thesis and their pragmatic functions. The research question which guided this study is:

What are the similarities and differences between American English speakers and Thai EFL writers in expressing their self-mention in their master’s thesis discussion sections?

1.2 Purpose and significance of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate the extent to which American-educated writers and EFL-educated writer employ ‘self-mention’ in writing discussion sections of their master’s theses. It also sought to identify differences and similarities in academic writing of the target sources. The line of research would contribute to our understanding of self-representation and its status in current academic writing among graduate students.

1.3 Scope and Limitations of the study

The study focuses on master’s thesis written by American-educated writers and Thai writers. The theses were selected randomly to be the sources of the investigation. The target theses are in the area of Applied Linguistics in 2008 - 2011. Therefore, the findings of the study do not represent the characteristics of academic writing by any larger group of population. In addition, the findings are based on an examination of a thesis section, not the entire thesis.

1.4 Definitions of Key Terms

Two operational definitions of key terms: self-mention and academic writing are given here. Although authors have given them different definitions but the ones adopted in this study are as follows:

1.4.1 Self-mentions

According to Hyland (2005: 178-181), *self-mention* refers to the use of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives to present propositional, affective and interpersonal information. ‘Self-mention’ is employed to distinguish between the writers’ thoughts and other theorists or researchers.

1.4.2 Academic Writing

Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) defined academic writing as any writing that fulfills a purpose of education in a college or university. They also included a professional writing that trained ‘academics’, both teachers and researchers, do for publications read and conferences attended by other academics.

To reiterate, the above definitions are called ‘operational definitions of key terms’. The definitions are employed specifically in the present study. The following chapter is devoted to a focused literature review.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter gives an overview of previous research on self-representation in second language writing. It begins with key concepts and a conceptual framework which guides this study. The remaining sections deal with existing literature and issues which motivate the study.

2.1 Expressing stance in academic writing

Macintyre (2009) and Hyland (2002) stated that academic writing is not just about conveying contents, it is also about the representation of the writer's self. How to express the writer's presence is related to self-mention and self-identity (Hyland, 2001). According to Matsuda and Tardy (2007), in recent years the notion of identity has received growing attention from researchers and linguists. The notion has become controversial issue among linguists. Many researchers considered self-mention as non-academic feature in writing. Meanwhile, others proposed the need of employing self-mention to represent the writer's identity and ownership. Many researchers have employed various terms to describe self-mention. Ivanic (1998) employed the term 'identity' with three aspects that interact in writing. According to Ivanic, the three aspects of 'identity' consist of; 1) 'the autobiographical self', emerged from the writer's experience, 2) 'the discoursal self', the stance the writer presents in the text, and 3) 'the authorial self', the responsibility of making claims of the writers in the text. The term 'evaluation' is employed by Hunston and Thompson (2000) who stated that 'evaluation' represents three functions: 1) to express the writer's opinion, 2) to construct and maintain relations between the writer and the reader and 3) to organize the discourse. Another term which has been employed to capture the sense of identity in written discourse is 'voice'. The term has been defined from various perspectives as follows.

Academic voice is an authoritative voice which informs the readers formally in academic texts. Academic texts are often thought to be less ‘personal’ or ‘individual’ than other types of writing. Alagozlu (2007) stated that a self-voice skill is necessary for academic success and for lifelong learning endeavors. In academic writing, the writers are expected to be able to make their own claim toward what they are studying. Maddalena (2010) mentioned that the writers have just paraphrased other scholars and rarely state their own claim explicitly. This can cause an ambiguity to the readers. They may wonder whether it is the writers’ claim or the scholar’s. To avoid the ambiguity, Maddalena (2010) suggested the writers to use personal pronouns in their writing. In developing their academic writing abilities, rather than blindly accepting other authors’ ideas, the writers are expected to be able to question the validity of the ideas. They are also encouraged to evaluate other’s argument to the degree that they have to make authorial presence known because, Hyland (2002) argued, academic writing is not only about conveying the material being written about, it is also about the author self representation. But how does self representation come about? Ivanic and Camps (2001) stated that writers’ identities are constructed in the ‘possibility of self-hood’ available in the socio-cultural context of writing. They defined ‘voice’ as ‘self-representation’ that is not only in writing but also in all human activity. Therefore, through writing, not only do writers construct their “self” but they also express it in a cyclical manner.

For the purpose of this study, the term ‘stance’ as defined by Hyland (2005) is adopted. This is because the notion of self representation as proposed by Ivanic and Camps (2001) seems to be too broad while the concept of stance is relatively more dynamic and context-specific. Hyland (2005) defined ‘stance’ as, “the ways academics annotate their texts to comment on the possible accuracy or creditability of a claim, the extent they want to commit themselves to it, or the attitude they want to convey to an entity, a proposition or the reader (p. 178)”.

This definition is used by several researchers (Breeze (2007), Akindela (2008), Macintyre (2009)) who conducted research on self-representation in writing. The definition comes from Hyland’s Model of Interaction in Academic Discourse (2005).

Hyland (2005) further defined four aspects of stance as follows: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Hedges are linguistic devices that indicate the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition. By using a hedge, the author presents the proposition as an opinion rather than a fact. In academic writing, it is necessary for the writers to certain in validity of their claims. It is common to see some hedges in writing to protect their propositions. Examples of hedges are the use of modal verbs (may, might, should), including others expressions such as possible, perhaps, and probability. Hyland (1994) also counted IF-clause, question forms, passive voice, and impersonal phrase as hedges.

Boosters facilitate writers to express their certainty in a proposition and to mark involvement with the topic and show solidarity with their audience. According to Hyland, boosters are the expression that create certainty of the writers' claim for instance; *definitely...*, *I am sure that...*, *we firmly believe...* .

Attitude markers indicate the writer's affective attitude to a proposition. Attitude markers include linguistic devices which convey surprise, agreement, emphasis and so on. The last category, self-mentions, involves the authors' use of personal pronouns or possessive adjectives to express information regarding a proposition, affection and interpersonal relation.

For the purpose of the research, this study will only focus on 'self-mentions'; the use of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives. According to Hyland (2002), self-mentions carry their own pragmatic functions as follows.

- (1) Stating a purpose – signals the writer's intention and provides structure for the text,
- (2) Explaining a procedure – describing the research procedures used,
- (3) Stating results/claims – explicit presentation of the writer's knowledge claim,
- (4) Expressing self-benefits – expression of what the writers have personally gained,
- (5) Elaborating an argument – description of the writer's line of reasoning,
- (6) Acknowledgements – recognition of assistance, (Hyland, 2002: 1100-1106).

2.2 Self-mentions

In academic writing such as a research report, authors should be able to not only present their findings, but also discuss them in order to demonstrate their interpretation and stance. Self-mention helps to represent their take on the findings. When the writers show a stance in their writing, it is believed that they will gain authority and respect for themselves as true academic writers. As far as self mention is concerned, Hyland (2002), Kuo (1999, cited in Hyland, 2002) and Tang (2006) agreed that the most noticeable way of presenting a self-identity is the use of first person pronouns possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives. Specifically using first person pronouns can help the piece of writing to become clearer and more assertive. Take the following as examples taken from the writing center of UNC College of Arts and Science (2010).

Original example: In studying American popular culture of the 1980s, the question of to what degree materialism was a major characteristic of the cultural milieu was explored.

New example using first person: In our study of American popular culture of the 1980s, we explored the degree to which materialism characterized the cultural milieu.

In demonstrating 'self-mention' in any writing, the use of personal pronouns is frequently mentioned. The personal pronouns here refer to '*I, we, me, and us*', including possessive determiners '*my and our*'. The debate over the appropriateness of employing personal pronouns in academic writing has been a controversial issue among theorists and researchers. The question for academic authors is whether or not to introduce and discuss the writers' ideas by overtly referring to themselves in academic writing. Although it is not strictly forbidden to use the personal pronouns in one's proposal, many researchers tend to avoid using these words. According to Sherlock (2008) the pronoun "*I*" is used when the writer needs to include himself/herself in describing relevant personal experience. To Sherlock (2008) personal pronouns are not necessary, since they may create a voice of uncertainty about the writers' ideas and in need of qualifying their statements as personal observations. To elaborate on the point made by Sherlock, consider the case in which

the first person pronoun “*I*” is occasionally used when the writer would like to demonstrate his/her own evidence. Sherlock (2008) suggested that the key of using pronouns in academic writing is to write without any use of pronouns.

In contrast to Sherlock’s opinion, using pronoun “*I*” can demonstrate the writer’s confidence and responsibility. She or he can be considered bold enough to take the responsibility with what s/he has just stated in the writing. Hyland (2002) argued that the use of “*I*” can help to establish writers’ commitment to their words and the formation of relationship with their readers. According to Hyland, the use of first person pronouns allows the writers to emphasize and to seek agreement for their own contributions. In terms of certainty, the readers will know where the writers stand and how their statements should be interpreted. Those personal pronouns represent the writer’s stance on a particular issue. Likewise, Tang (2006) proposed that the use of the first person pronoun can signal confidence and a willingness on the part of the writer to take ownership of the ideas in the text. Moreover, it can demonstrate the writers’ critical view on the issue.

2.3 Stance and English L2 learners: relevant previous studies

From my personal observation, several L2 writers tend to avoid using personal pronouns in their academic writing. Hyland (2002) mentioned that while the use of these personal pronouns and possessive determiners are a powerful rhetorical strategy to emphasize the writer’s academic contribution, many second language writers feel uncomfortable using them. Their authoritative connotation is a major cause which prevents the writers from employing first person pronouns and possessive adjectives. Some writers and researchers, especially novice ones, find the use of personal pronouns to be a violation of norms in academic writing. They generally try not to violate this by not adding their personal involvement in the writing. According to Hyland (2002), the novices frequently consider themselves non-professional in some particular areas of knowledge. Therefore, lacking self-confidence, they prefer not to make any argument against other theorists or researchers.

To explore the notion of self-mention in writing, Hyland (2002) examined written project reports produced by final year Hong Kong undergraduate students.

The reports were collected from various disciplines including biology, mechanical engineering, information systems, business studies, TESL, economics, public administration and social sciences. He specifically explored the notion of identity in L2 writing by examining the use of personal pronouns by 64 Hong Kong undergraduate theses. The students' research reports were compared with a large corpus of research articles published in academic journal written by expert writers in order to gain insights into similarities and differences between novice and expert writers. He also interviewed the students and their supervisors about the writing and impressions about disciplinary practices. Hyland found the students underused authorial references. The study identified that the students preferred to avoid self-mentioning in the texts, particularly in sections which involved making arguments or claims. The study also showed that the intention of the students in using self-mention was to elaborate methodology rather than argumentative functions. Hyland (2002) concluded that self-mentioning through the use of first person pronouns is relatively more common among expert writers. Hyland used this finding to claim that personal pronouns can be used and indeed are used in academic writing. He therefore encouraged the students or novice writers to use them.

According to Macintyre (2009), academic textbooks used by L2 writers suggest that academic writing involves an objective exploration of ideas, and as a result it downplays individuality. In order to verify this claim, Macintyre conducted research on this issue to discover how teachers responded to their students' use of personal pronouns in writing. Five teachers who teach writing at a university in Japan were asked to participate in the study. The participants were required to examine a text written by a student that contained several personal pronouns. Later, they were given a similar text which had been edited by the students. The edited paper had been removed the personal pronouns by using grammatical strategies such as the use of passive voice. The five teachers were asked which of the two texts they preferred and stated the reason. The teachers were interviewed to elaborate their point of view toward the use of personal pronouns in writing. The findings suggested that the teachers tended to discourage the students from personal pronouns. However, the participants agreed that it was acceptable to use them. Two out of five participants well accepted the use of personal pronouns. The finding confirmed Hyland's

suggestion in teaching writing. Hyland (2002) suggested that in teaching writing, the focus should be on making the students aware of the features of writing in their discipline, including the use of personal pronouns.

However, the notion of self-mention in writing is neglected in many writing classes. Barnawi (2011) attempted to explain this with three reasons. The first reason is self-mention is not acceptable in the traditional education system. According to Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) the EFL teachers tend to believe that because their students have not been taught to think independently in their first language writing, they may lack individualized voice in their second language writing. The second reason is that the teachers themselves have not paid much attention to the notion of self-mention in their writing instructions. They may assume that their students are incapable of positioning themselves, or incorporating judgments and beliefs into their writing. The third reason is that the students provide loyalty to texts given as course materials, and so they do not experiment with any other writing approach not mentioned in or endorsed by the textbooks. Barnawi (2011) also added that student writers may reject the notion of self-mention because they believe and trust the information delivered by their teachers. However, Tang (2006) suggested that how novice writers present themselves in their writing is a crucial part of successful academic writing. For the author, writers should be encouraged to mention themselves since at the early stage of writing development.

The controversy over whether academic writers should employ 'self-mention' in their writing led to the present study. The study investigated the use of personal pronouns and possessive determiners in writing discussion sections of master's theses in applied linguistics written by native English speakers (American Theses) and Thai EFL learners' theses. The study focuses on similarities and differences between American English speakers and Thai EFL writers in expressing their self-mention in their master's thesis discussion sections.

In the next chapter, methodological details of the study are presented.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This chapter describes the method used in the study including the sources of the data, research instruments, procedures, data analysis, expected outcomes and additional relevant information.

3.1 Sources of Data

Authors. Ten American English speakers' master's theses and ten Thai EFL master's theses published in 2008 - 2011 in the area of applied linguistics were selected randomly as the sources of the investigation. The American English speakers here referred to the learners who were exposed and trained in the environment of American educational system. They may or may not be the American Native Speakers but all of them studied in the universities of the United States. The study could not find the true identity of the theses' writers. The Thai writers here referred to the learners who were exposed and trained in the Thai educational system. All of them studied at universities in Thailand. The Thai authors are teachers-in-training who can be considered advanced learners of English. The reason for choosing these teachers-in-training as representatives of EFL learners was that given their years of training in English, it was assumed that they had been relatively well exposed to the genre of academic writing. Being graduate students presumably afforded them an opportunity to express themselves through argumentative writing assignments as part of graduate training. Therefore, they were ideal as participants for this study.

Unit of analysis. The unit of analysis in this study includes linguistic tools signaling identity and position in the study. They are: 1) personal pronouns and 2) possessive determiners appearing in the discussion sections of the theses. The reason for analyzing the discussion sections is that they contain a relatively large number of occasions in which the authors can express their stance to interpret the results of the study. Most likely they will state their claims and their opinions about the results of

the study. Examining American English speakers' and EFL master's theses allowed for a comparison of stylistic features in academic writing of the two groups, which would help to understand how these authors position themselves in academic writing. (See Appendix E and F for samples of discussion sections of American and Thai master's thesis.)

3.2 Procedures

Ten American English Speakers' master's thesis (NS) and ten Thai EFL master's thesis (2008 - 2011) in the area of Applied Linguistics were selected randomly as the sources of the investigation. The sources were selected randomly but by the criterion that they would have relatively equal amounts of the written material. The American English Speakers' master's thesis corpus and the Thai EFL master's thesis corpus were reviewed to find out the similarities and the differences in expressing their self-mention in their master's thesis discussion sections. The discussion sections would be scanned to produce an electronic corpus. This corpus was searched for the linguistics elements and discourse markers which represent 'self-mention' of the writers. The corpus would be searched for specific elements by using *WordPilot 2000*, a commercially available concordance program. The linguistics elements and discourse markers here refer to; 1) the use of personal pronouns '*I, we, me, and us*' and 2) possessive determiners '*my and our*' and possessive pronouns '*mine and ours*'.

3.3 Data Analysis

After collection, the data was divided into two groups; American English speakers and Thai EFL. Each group was analyzed for frequency of 'self-mention' indicators in two categories; 1) personal pronouns and 2) possessive determiners. The data was analyzed and compared across groups in terms of the degree of 'self-mention' in their writing. The American English speakers' data was served as a baseline to be compared with the Thai EFL thesis to determine differences or similarities. All 'self-mention' indicators were examined in context to determine their pragmatic functions and the underlying intention of using them. The Hyland's Model

of Interaction in Academic Discourse (2005) was employed as a framework to explore the notion of self-mention in the writing. Hyland discusses four linguistic devices which authors use to interact with their audience. They are 1) hedges (devices that indicate the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than accredited fact), 2) boosters (devices which help the writers to express their certainty in what they say and to mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with their audience), 3) attitude markers (devices which show the writers' affective attitude toward a particular statement and convey the writers' emotions or feelings such as surprise, importance, frustration and so on), 4) self-mentions (pronouns and possessive adjectives to present propositional, affective, and interpersonal information). This study focused only on self-mentions. It specifically attempted to identify functions of these self-mentioning devices. As Hyland further proposes, there are six functions of self-mentions in academic discourse; acknowledgements, elaborating an argument, explaining a procedure, expressing self-benefits, stating a purpose and stating results or claims. These six functions form a set of criteria by which self-mentioning devices found in the corpus were classified.



CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This chapter begins with an overview of the corpus. The differences and similarities between the American and Thai corpus are highlighted and discussed as follows.

4.1 Overview of the Corpus

To recall, the study is based on an investigation of discussion sections in 20 master’s theses: ten theses written by American-educated graduate students and ten theses written by Thai graduate students. While I am aware that American-educated students are not necessarily American English native speakers, it should be safe to assume that their opportunity to be educated in the American educational system affords them better opportunities to be exposed to the language itself as well as American principles of academic writing than the EFL writers. Therefore, for ease of discussion, they will be referred to as “American” as in “American thesis corpus” or “American data” with no assumption that they are native speakers although there is a chance that they are. The topics of the research reported in all of these theses are in the area of linguistics. It was found that there were two categories of the discussion sections: embedded and isolate. An embedded discussion is written along with other sections of the theses while and isolate discussion is a stand-alone section by itself. There were three embedded discussion sections and seven isolate discussion sections for the American master’s thesis corpus. In the Thai master’s thesis corpus, there were eight embedded and two isolate discussion sections. A word count returned a total of 54,601 words for both corpuses combined. The American corpus contained 38,290 words while the Thai counterpart, 16,311 words—a dramatic difference in length. The longest American thesis contained 6,599 words and for the shortest one, 1,087 words. In the Thai master’s thesis corpus, the longest discussion section contained 3,767 words and the shortest one, 351 words. Please see Table 4.1 for details.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of American and Thai master’s theses

American Theses			Thai Theses		
Thesis Number	Word count	Structure	Thesis Number	Word count	Structure
1	3,005	Embedded	11	1,293	Embedded
2	5,282	Isolate	12	958	Embedded
3	6,599	Embedded	13	1,243	Embedded
4	4,974	Isolate	14	2,213	Embedded
5	4,406	Isolate	15	2,220	Isolate
6	1,087	Isolate	16	1,849	Embedded
7	2,245	Isolate	17	1,582	Embedded
8	4,510	Embedded	18	351	Embedded
9	3,766	Isolate	19	3,767	Isolate
10	2,416	Isolate	20	835	Isolate
Total	38,290	n/a	Total	16,311	n/a

4.2 Findings

This section offers a general observation for each corpus and a discussion of key findings. It begins with the American corpus, followed by the Thai corpus.

After each discussion section was scanned for the target self-mentioning pronouns, namely, *I, we, my, our, mine, ours, me, and us*. These pronouns were counted and converted into percentages of usage by the following formula:

Percentage of use =
$$\frac{\text{Token count of a particular pronoun found in the section}}{\text{Number of words in the section}} \times 100$$

The percentages of use for each pronoun were then compared across the corpora to determine the extent to which the authors differed or resembled each other.

According to Table 4.2, the authors of the American theses did mention themselves despite varying degrees of pronoun use. As can be seen, self-mentions were found in seven out of ten theses.

Table 4.2 Frequency Distribution of Self-mentioning Pronouns in the American Theses

Thesis Number	Word count	I 28.96%	We 30.55%	My 15.07%	Our 16.66%	Mine 0.39%	Ours 0.39%	Me 3.57%	Us 4.36%	Total %
1	3,005	14 0.46%	0	11 0.36%	0	1 0.03%	0	0	0	26 0.86%
2	5,282	0	5 0.09%	0	0	0	0	0	0	5 0.09%
3	6,599	36 0.54%	23 0.34%	12 0.18%	21 0.31%	0	1 0.01%	9 0.13%	5 0.07%	107 1.62%
4	4,974	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
5	4,406	15 0.34%	30 0.68%	12 0.27%	4 0.09%	0	0	0	0	61 1.38%
6	1,087	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
7	2,245	8 0.35%	1 0.04%	2 0.08%	0	0	0	0	0	11 0.48%
8	4,510	0	0	1 0.02%	0	0	0	0	0	1 0.02%
9	3,766	0	18 0.47%	0	17 0.45%	0	0	0	6 0.15%	41 1.08%
10	2,416	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
Total	38,290	73 0.19%	77 0.20%	38 0.09%	42 0.10%	1 0.00%	1 0.00%	9 0.02%	11 0.02%	252 0.65%

Thesis Number 3 showed the overall highest percentage of use (1.62%) or, followed by the Thesis Number 5, (1.38%). In contrast, Thesis Number 8 presented the lowest percentage of use (0.02%). In the overall, the American master’s thesis corpus demonstrated 0.65% of using self-mention in their thesis writing (that is, 252 self-mentioning pronoun tokens out of 38,290 words). These pronouns can be ranked in descending order of percentage of use as follows: *We, I, our, my, us, me, mine, and ours*. Interestingly, three American master’s theses (Thesis Number 4, 6, 10) did not contain any self-mention. A close look at the topics of the theses does not indicate any different from others since they are in the area of Applied Linguistics. Therefore, the stylistic preference can be used to explain this phenomenon.

Unlike the American corpus, the Thai corpus showed a relatively lower use of self-mentioning pronouns. According to Table 4.3 below, only two out of ten theses contained three types of self-mentioning pronouns: *I, we, my*.

Table 4.3 Frequency Distribution of Self-mentioning Pronouns in the Thai Theses

Thesis number	Word count	I 40%	We 20%	My 40%	our	mine	ours	me	us	Total %
1	1,293	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	958	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	1,243	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	2,213	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	2,220	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	1,849	2 0.10%	0	2 0.10%	0	0	0	0	0	4 0.21%
7	1,582	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	351	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	3,767	0	1 0.02%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 0.02%
10	835	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	16,311	2 0.01%	1 0.06%	2 0.01%	0	0	0	0	0	5 0.03%

Thesis Number 6 showed the overall highest percentage of use (0.21%). In contrast, Thesis Number 9 showed the lowest percentage of use (0.02%). In the overall, the Thai master’s thesis corpus demonstrated 0.03% of using self-mention in their thesis writing (that is, 5 self-mentioning pronoun tokens out of 16,311 words). These pronouns can be ranked in descending order of percentage or use as follows: *I, my, and we*. *Functions of self-mentioning devices*

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the model proposed by Hyland (2002) was used to identify functions of self-mentioning devices in the corpus. It was found at of the six functions described in Hyland (2002), only five were relevant and can be found in the corpus. The first category of function—acknowledgment—is not relevant as it usually occurs in the acknowledgment section in which the author thank or acknowledge his or her gratitude for other individuals for their assistance. Found in the corpus were five functions only: namely, explaining a procedure, stating results or claims, elaborating on an argument, expressing self-benefits, and stating a purpose.

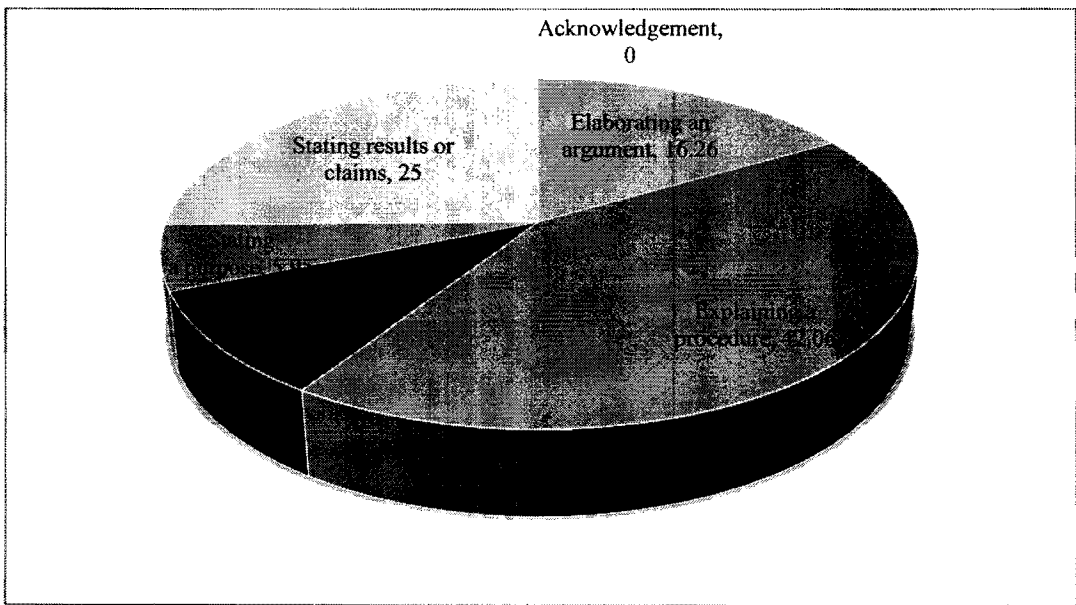


Figure 4.1 Functions of self-mentioning devices in the American corpus

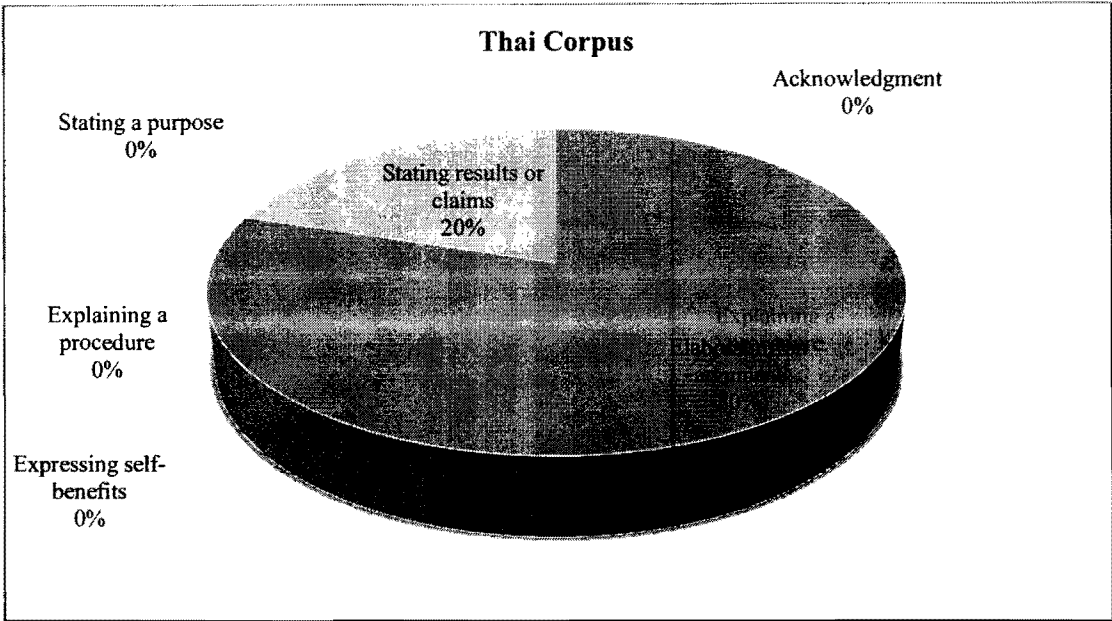


Figure 4.2 Functions of self-mentioning devices in the Thai corpus

Explaining a procedure. Explaining a procedure is a description of research methods used in the theses. The writers often mentioned steps of doing their research; what they have done, what they did in completing the research. Consider the following examples.

(1) In this section, we analyze the most significant features of the online chat room segments in terms of the relation between the lexical choices, such as the use of referents, the interactive factors, such as assumed common ground and physical co-presence, and the effects of the online medium on these choices and assumptions. (American Thesis#2)

(2) Next, we compare the virtual communication of the chat rooms with the classroom segments to identify the differences and commonalities of the two modes of communication. (American Thesis#2)

Explaining a procedure is the first most frequent use of self-mention in the American thesis corpus, 42.06%. The highest frequency of self-mention was ‘we’, 13.88%, followed by the first person pronoun ‘I’, 12.69%.

Stating results or claims. Hyland (2002) claimed that this function was the most self-assertive of all. The self-mentioning pronouns were employed to present

the writers' stance. The writers would explicitly present their own claims. The claims were drawn from the results of the study, including the writers' personal knowledge.

(3) Among them, we see that interlocutors arrive at a "good enough" shared context for their immediate purposes quickly, frequently and in the midst of intervening conversations and lines of text. (American Thesis#2)

(4) I believe this helps students routinely think about character, setting, problem and solution in relation to the stories they read without substantially changing the nature of the assignment. (American Thesis#3)

(5) On the other hand, I consider that learning style influences learning motivation. (Thai thesis#6)

The claims made by the writers did not come from their personal opinion. In contrast, these claims were the results of their studies. As a result, they tended to use self-mention to propose their own claims. The use of self-mention could be taken as a way of demonstrating their ownership of the claims. The American corpus showed 25% of using self-mention for stating results or claims. This was the second most frequent use of self-mention in the corpus. Meanwhile, there was one instance of using 'I' for stating claims appeared in the Thai master thesis corpus.

Elaborating on an argument. This function is considered to be a crucial element in academic writing. The purpose of elaborating on an argument was to facilitate the readers to comprehend the writers' claims. It is a way of supporting the claims or beliefs with evidence or details in order to persuade the reader to agree with them. Below are examples from the corpus.

(6) But interestingly enough, two of the groups elected an ELL as their speaker without teacher intervention or prompting, which I take as a sign that the students really don't distinguish between ELL or native speaker unless we unwittingly make it an issue. (American Thesis#3)

(7) Many of our ELLs have difficulty responding to the comprehension questions, and I believe this is partially due to the fact that fluency and comprehension are two different skills, yet we're assessing them simultaneously. (American Thesis#3)

The study demonstrated that 16.26% of self-mention in the American corpus functioned in elaborating an argument. This is the third most frequent used of

self-mention in the American thesis corpus. The highest frequency of usage was the personal pronoun 'we', 5.55% (see Appendix C).

(8) This is because in a high continuer language such as Japanese, if we go through and remove all of the continuers, we still have their influence in the data. (American Thesis#5)

(9) In other words, if a child is growing up in a location where coda clusters are more frequently reduced, then we would expect for that child to be more likely to follow the OnsetCC learning path than a child growing up in an environment where coda clusters are more frequently maintained. (American Thesis#9)

The Thai master thesis corpus also showed self-mention as a tool to elaborate on an argument.

(10) In my opinion, it may [sic] because the EFL learners are not in an English speaking environment all the time, they may have a stronger desire to push themselves to develop their English ability in situations that do not force them to use English more than the ESL learners, who do not need to find an opportunity to use English. (Thai Thesis#6)

The example above shows that the writer used self-mention to present her own opinion to support the argument. She would like to elaborate more about the point she has mentioned. She might not be certain whether the readers could comprehend the argument, therefore, providing some more explanation was considered.

Expressing self-benefits. Expression of what the writers have personally gained is called expressing self-benefits. The writers could state explicitly what they gained from conducting the research. Since it was self-benefits which the writers gained personally, therefore self-mention was common.

(11) Coming from a professional theatre background, I am now much more confident in my creative drama knowledge and abilities. (American Thesis#1)

(12) My co-teaching partner and I are more committed than ever to including explicit vocabulary instruction in our daily lesson plans. (American Thesis#3)

The American thesis corpus demonstrated 9.52% of expressing self-benefits of self-mention. The most frequent use was 'I' (5.15%).

(13) In the very beginning, all I had was some limited experience working with English language learners and a gut feeling that creative drama could help them speak English. It has been a very gratifying experience to see my idea not only succeed, but to be able to support the use of creative drama with the literature and research on English language learning. (American Thesis#1)

Interestingly, Hyland (2002) stated in his study that *Expressing self-benefits* could not find in the professional research texts. This present study revealed that the writers used personal statements just to claim their personal benefits. However, they did not present their personal statements to interpret others researchers' claims.

Stating a purpose. According to Hyland (2002) the writers used self-mention to state their purposes in order to indicate their intention and provide structure for the text. The writers intended to signal the direction of the research to their readers.

(14) The goal of my research was to decrease anxiety and increase confidence and motivation about speaking English for English language learners. (American Thesis#1)

(15) In this section, we will specifically focus on three aspects of the model that might be modified to reflect the influence of c-centers on the children's developing grammar: the constraint plasticities, the constraints themselves and the target output distributions. (American Thesis#9)

Apart from mentioning the direction of the research, the writers also indicated their intention to put the research results into practice.

(16) All of us indicated a willingness and eagerness to continue team teaching –to leverage our experiences this year and teach again as partners for the coming year. (American Thesis#3)

(17) However, for next year, my co-teacher and I have decided to use a different Word Study program for all our students. (American Thesis#3)

5.95% of the American master thesis corpus demonstrated the function of stating a purpose in using self-mention in the writing. The possessive adjective 'our' was the highest use of this function, 1.98%. This function is considered useful in clarifying the direction of the research. However, it also demonstrated the unconfident

of the writers in positioning their claims. Stating a purpose is simply signaling the audiences through the text.

In summary, it was found that the authors of the American theses did mention themselves despite varying degrees of pronoun use. As can be seen, self-mentions were found in seven out of ten theses. Unlike the American corpus, the Thai corpus showed a relatively lower use of self-mentioning pronouns. According to the finding, only two out of ten theses contained self-mentioning pronouns. Based on the model proposed by Hyland (2002) in identifying six functions of self-mentioning devices in the corpus, only five were relevant and can be found in the corpus: namely, explaining a procedure, stating results or claims, elaborating on an argument, expressing self-benefits, and stating a purpose respectively. The personal pronoun “we” was the highest frequency of using self-mention. Its function mainly was to explaining a procedure, followed by stating results or claims. The personal pronoun “I” was the second highest frequency in using self-mention. Similar to “we”, “I” was used to explaining a procedure of the study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the discussion and conclusion of the study, followed by limitations, and recommendations for further study in self-mentioning in academic writings.

5.1 Discussions

The results of the study presented above were the responses to the research question of this study:

What are the similarities and differences between American English speakers and Thai EFL writers in expressing their self-mention in their master's thesis discussion sections?

5.2 Similarities and differences between self-mentions in the two corpora

As mentioned before, it was observed that writers in both groups mentioned themselves. However, as the findings have shown, writers of the American theses have shown a higher degree of use than the Thai counterparts. The findings demonstrated a difference between the two corpora. Overall, the American corpus showed 0.65% of using self-mention; meanwhile, 0.03% was investigated in the Thai corpus. After comparing the two corpora, the finding suggested that there was no similarity in using self-mention between the two corpora. The American corpus presented 252 instances of using self-mention out of 38,290 words. Meanwhile, there were only five out of 16,311 instances of using self-mention were investigated in the Thai corpus. The difference of number of instances in using self-mention is highly different. It could be considered as incomparable. As the study has mentioned earlier, in academic writing such as that of a research report, authors should be able to not only present their findings, but also discuss them in order to demonstrate their interpretation and stance. That the Thai writers used self-mentions less extensively

than their American counterparts could have come from different reasons. First, it is possible that they were not confident about their ability, be it academic or linguistic. Recall that by mentioning themselves, the writers let their own voice be heard by the audience. Although using self-m When they stated something, it meant that they had to take responsibility to their words. That was considered a tough condition for them. They were aware of being criticized by other theorists or researchers. To avoid the unexpected outcome or feedback, they preferred not to make any claim against others. Moreover, they also avoided making their own claims.

One noticeable finding of the study was the use of self-mention among writers in the American corpus. According to the findings, there were three American theses which could not find any use of self-mention in the text. These theses were Thesis Number 4, 6 and 10. Instead of using self-mention when referring to themselves, the writers employed self-impersonal discourse and avoided stating direct self-mention. Take the following as an example.

(18) As previously mentioned, past unreal conditionals are considered to be one of the last grammatical elements acquired by second language learners due to its complexity (Burt & Dulay, 1980). (American Thesis#4)

The writer just stated "*As previously mentioned...*". It could be "*As I have mentioned previously...*". The writer could add the first person pronoun "*I*" in making his own claim. He could state what he had done previously. Using self-mention could make the claim more understandable in terms of who owned the stance. However, the above example can be considered as stylistic preference in academic writing.

The frequency of using first person pronoun in the American corpus was worth mentioning. The findings suggested that the pronoun "*we*" was the first most frequent of using self-mention. The use of "*we*" accounted for 30.55% of all self-mentions in the American corpus (77 instances out of 252 instances). The findings also indicated that the highest frequency of using personal pronoun "*we*" was found in the function of explaining a procedure (see Appendix C). Take the followings as examples.

(19) According to the questionnaire completed by the four team teaching participants, (see Appendix C) we spend between 30-120 minutes planning lessons with our co-teacher each week. (American Thesis#3)

(20) So when we look at the continuer results, we must assume a small degree of error beyond what is captured in the statistics, because of any inaccuracies that may have arisen in the tallying of continuers. (American Thesis#5)

The reason might be that the writers did not conduct the research alone. Many of them participated in team teaching classes. Although, the writer was the only one who wrote the study, he did a research on a large scale of participants. He could not manage everything by himself. Therefore, when he wrote something down in the study, he referred to the whole group by using the pronoun “we”, which simply a statement of fact. Harwood (2005a) defined “we” into two categories. The first “we” was called “*inclusive we*”. The “*inclusive we*” referred to the writers and the readers together. The second category of “we” was called “*exclusive we*”. The “*exclusive we*” referred to the writers and other persons associated with the writers; co-writers, colleagues. Take the following as an example.

(21) We determined that in order to facilitate joint planning time, the team teachers should schedule their afternoon *prep* (preparation period) for the same 50-minute block. (American Thesis#3)

(22) However, when averaged as instanced per hour, we see that there are over twice as many content-related instances in the classrooms than in the chat rooms. (American Thesis#2)

The above samples#19, #21, and #22 were considered as “*exclusive we*”. “*We*” in the samples referred to the writer himself and his co-workers or co-researchers. The sample #20 was considered as “*inclusive we*”. The “we” in #20 was used to engage the researchers with the readers.

The first person pronoun “we” was also found in the Thai corpus. Instead of functioning for explaining a procedure as the American corpus, “we” was employed to serve the function of elaborating an argument.

(23) As we can see, B4 promotes the least gains for all faculties except social science. This might be assumed that B4 is too difficult so the participants put the least effort or they just could not do the exercise and so gained the least in Gain 1. (Thai Thesis#9)

After making a claim, the Thai writer used the pronoun “we” to elaborate the argument. He attempted to elaborate more on his point by providing more explanation to the readers. In order to elaborate the finding, Ohta (1991) claimed that “we” could be found in Asian cultures where collective identity is more valued than individuality. However, taking a different perspective, it is also possible that “we” was used as the “*inclusive we*” to engage the audience. If this is the case, this is not related to cultural influence.

The first person pronoun “I” was the second most frequent of using self-mention in the American corpus. The use of “I” accounted 28.96% of all self-mentions in the American corpus (73 instances out of 252 instances), (see Appendix C). Similar to the pronoun “we”, the pronoun “I” was employed to serve the function of explaining a procedure. Harwood (2005b) had studied the usage of “I” in a corpus of native speaker computing students. The study suggested that almost all of “I” used by the students to serve the function of describing methodology and procedure. The finding of this present study resonates with Harwood’s. Take the followings as examples.

(24) For this reason, I included additional variables, such as what initiation types are used by the interlocutors during their dialogues, which interlocutor follows up on the topic, and how much information about the session and its goals each interlocutor holds. (American Thesis#7)

(25) I looked through approximately 10% of the data by hand, so any missing continuers would have been very rare and not had much of any impact on my final continuer percentages. (American Thesis#5)

The first person pronoun “I” was used to serve two functions by the Thai corpus. The functions were elaborating an argument and stating results or claims. Take the followings as example. The Example #26 shows elaboration of an argument while Example#27 shows a statement of results or claims.

(26) In relation to the studies of Veronica (2008) and Orwig (2003) I disagree that learning motivation can affect learning style, because motivation can change over time. (Thai Thesis#6)

(27) On the other hand, I consider that learning style influences learning motivation. (Thai Thesis#6)

When compared the two corpuses, the American corpus tended to use more “I” than the Thai corpus did. The study of Hyland (2002) stated the findings of the non-native students underuse “I”.

In summary, this study is consistent with Hyland (2002) in that there was an underuse of “I” by non-native student writers. The study suggested that the American master’s thesis writers tended to use more personal pronouns in their academic writing than the Thai master’s thesis writers did. Although, the findings could indicate the use of self-mention in the Thai corpus, the frequency of using was highly different from the American corpus.

5.3 Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate similarities and differences between American English speakers and Thai EFL writers in themselves in their master’s thesis discussion sections through their use of personal pronouns and possessive determiners. The findings demonstrated that self-mentioning devices were found in both the American corpus and the Thai corpus. However, the frequencies self-mention devices in the two corpuses were highly different. It was found that the majority of the American master’s thesis writers (seven out of 10) used self-mention in their writing: seven out of ten theses employed self-mention. This could be explained by stylistic preference. Compared to the American master’s thesis corpus, the Thai master’s thesis corpus a relatively lesser degree of use; there were only two theses with self-mentions. This phenomenon could be indicative of cultural influence as found in Kaplan (1966) and Connor (1996). Kaplan (1966) studied the interference of culturally bound first language (L1) thought and writing patterns on writing in a second language (L2). The proposed research paid attention to cultural and linguistic differences in ESL students’ writings. The findings suggested that one’s native language influences one’s thought. Likewise, Connor (1996) proposed that the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfere with writing in the second language.

However, the findings suggest that there is no consensus in the use of self-mentions in academic writing. As far as this study is concerned, some possible factors affecting the use of self-mentions such as proficiency of the writers in the target language, critical thinking ability, including being novices.

In terms of pedagogical implications, it would be fruitful for academic writing instructors to be open-minded about their students' use of self-mentions as the findings in the American corpus revealed that it was acceptable in using self-mention in academic writing. Therefore, by allowing self-mentions, instructors especially the EFL instructors may encourage the students to be confident in presenting their own stance.

5.4 Limitations of the study

This study had some limitations. For instance, there were only ten theses used as representative of the two corpuses. The study focused on reviewing the discussion sections of some master's thesis of American learners and Thai EFL learners. These sources do not represent the entire EFL learners' population. Nor do they well represent writers educated in the target language environment, be they native speakers or more advanced writers. Moreover, the study did not examine other linguistic devices can also present self-voice or stance of the writer. Using adverbs such as *unfortunately*, *undeniably*, or verbs such as *suffer*, *happy*, can also demonstrate self-voice. Had it done so, the examination of self-mentions would have been more thorough.

5.5 Recommendations for further study

The findings in the present study could not put an end to the debate as to whether using self-mention in academic writing is appropriate. They serve to generate more research avenues for future studies. Among other things, further research could focus on a larger corpus and involve an examination of other self-mentioning devices. Comparing the entire thesis between NS and EFL would also be fruitful. Furthermore, a comparison of writings from different periods of time may show a development of

trends in writing. Moreover, further research could investigate other sections of the thesis to compare the distribution of self-mentions.

In summary, this study has shown that American-educated writers and EFL writers differed in their use of self-mentions. That is, the former group used more self-mentions than their Thai EFL counterparts. The study has provided empirical evidence to support the view that self-mentions may not be a negative practice for academic writing.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Akindele, O. (2008). "A critical analysis of the literature review section of graduate dissertations at the university of Botswana", English for Specific Purpose World. 7(1): 4-20.
- Alagozlu, N. (2007). "Critical thinking and voice in EFL writing", The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly. 9(1): 118-136.
- Arnaudet, M., & Barrett, M. (1984). Approaches to academic reading and writing. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Breeze, R. (2007). "How personal is this text? Researching writer and reader presence in student writing using Wordsmith tools", Computer Resources for Language Learning. 1(1): 14-21.
- Connor, U. (1996). Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second language writing. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- _____. (2002). New directions in contrastive rhetoric. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Day, R. (1994). How to write and publish a scientific paper. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Draper, V. (1983). Addressing self-representation in academic writing in a beginners' EAP classroom. Journal of Language and Learning. 5(2): 76-85.
- Department of Translation Studies. (2012). Academic Writing. www.uta.fi/FAST/FIN/RESEARCH/acadwrit.html. November 11th, 2012.
- Harwood, N. (2005a). What do we want EAP teaching materials for? Applied Linguistics. 26(3): 343-375.
- _____. (2005b). "I hope to interact the memory problem, but I made no impact whatsoever': discussing methods in computing science using 'I'", English for Specific Purposes. 24(3): 243-267.
- Hyland, K. (2002). "Authority and invisibility: authorial identity in academic writing", Journal of Pragmatics. 34(8), 1091-1112.

REFERENCES (CONTINUED)

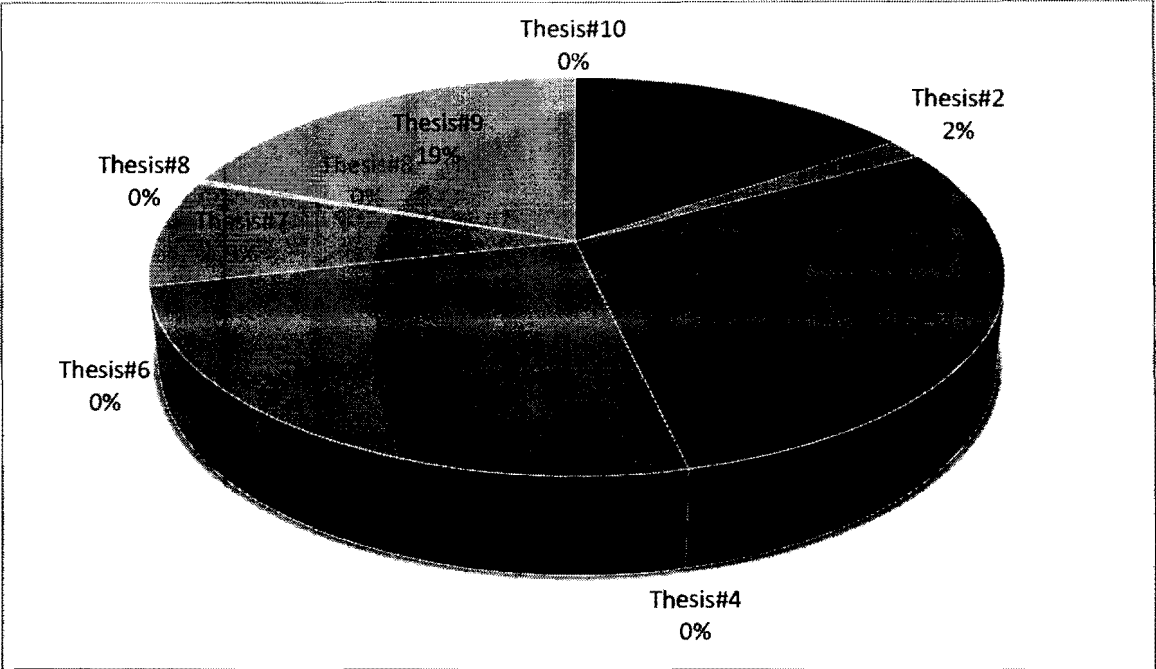
- Hyland, K. (2002). "Options of identity in academic writing", ELT Journal. 56(4), 351-358.
- _____. (2005). "Stance and engagement: a model of interaction in academic discourse", Discourse Studies. 7(2): 173-192.
- Ivanic, R., & Camps, D. (2001). "I am how I sound: voice as self-representation in L2 Writing", Journal of Second Language Writing. 10(3): 3-33.
- Kaplan, R. (1966). "Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education", Language Learning. 16(1): 1-20.
- Kubota, R., & Lehner, A. (2004). "Toward critical contrastive rhetoric", Journal of Second Language Writing. 13(1): 7-27.
- Lester, James, D. (1993). Writing research papers. (ed). NY: Harper Collins.
- Macintyre, R. (2009). "Pedagogy, practice and personal pronouns: the use of "I" and "We" in academic writing", Bulletin of the Faculty of Foreign Studies. 44(1): 31-45.
- Mckinney, K. (2010). "'I need you to say "I": Why first person is important in college writing", Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing. 1(1): 179-190.
- Matsuda, P. K., & Tardy, C. M. (2007). "Voice in academic writing: The rhetorical construction of author identity in blind manuscript review", English for Specific Purpose. 26(1): 235-249.
- Ohta, S. A. (1991). "Evidentiality and politeness in Japanese", Applied Linguistics. 2(2): 211-238.
- Phornprapha, J. (2009). Master's thesis writing of Thai students: A contrastive study using genre analysis. Master's thesis: Indiana University, Indiana.
- Sherlock, K. J. (2008). "Advice on academic tone", Academic tone, 1. www.grossmont.edu/karl.sherlock/English098/Resources/Academic_Tone.pdf. November 2nd, 2012.
- Spencer, C. & Arbon, B. (1996). Foundations of writing. IL: NTC Publishing Group.

REFERENCES (CONTINUED)

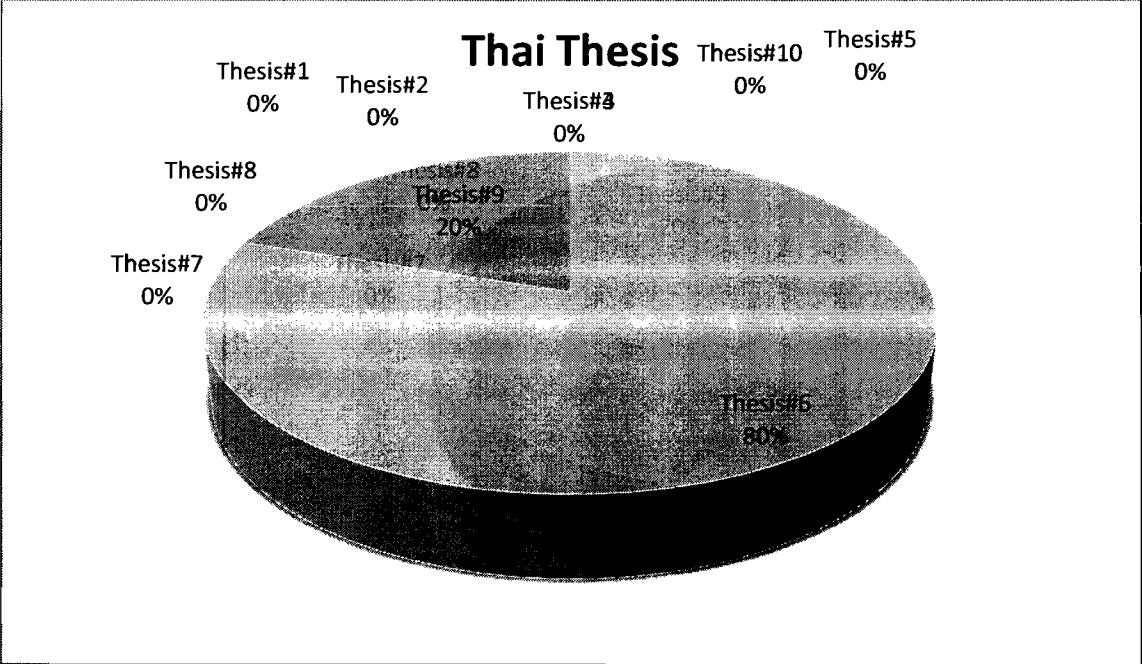
- Swales, J., & Feak, C. (1994). Academic writing for graduate students: essential tasks and skills. MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Tang, R. (2006). "Addressing self-representation in academic writing in a beginners' EAP classroom", Journal of Language and Learning. 5(2): 76-85.
- Thaiss, C., & Zarwacki, T. M. (2006). Engaged writers and dynamic disciplines. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SELF-MENTIONING
PRONOUNS IN THE AMERICAN THESES



APPENDIX B
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SELF-MENTIONING
PRONOUNS IN THE THAI THESES



APPENDIX C
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SELF-MENTIONING
PRONOUNS IN THE AMERICAN THESES

Functions	I	we	my	our	mine	ours	me	us	Total
1. Acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Elaborating an argument	11 4.36%	14 5.55%	6 2.38%	7 2.77%	0	0	2 0.79%	4 1.58%	44 16.26%
3. Explaining a procedure	32 12.69%	35 13.88%	15 5.95%	17 6.74%	0	0	2 0.79%	5 1.98%	106 42.06%
4. Expressing self-benefits	13 5.15%	1 0.39%	7 2.77%	0	1 0.39%	0	2 0.79%	0	24 9.52%
5. Stating a purpose	4 1.58%	1 0.39%	4 1.58%	5 1.98%	0	0	0	1 0.39%	15 5.95%
6. Stating results or claims	13 5.15%	25 9.92%	8 3.17%	12 4.76%	0	1 0.39%	3 1.19%	1 0.39%	63 25%
Total	73 28.96%	76 30.15%	40 15.87%	41 16.26%	1 0.39%	1 0.39%	9 3.57	11 4.36%	252 100%

APPENDIX D
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SELF-MENTIONING
PRONOUNS IN THE THAI THESES

Functions	I	we	my	our	mine	ours	me	us	Total
1.Acknowledgement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2.Elaborating an argument	1 20%	1 20%	2 40%	0	0	0	0	0	4 80%
3.Explaining a procedure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4.Expressing self-benefits	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.Stating a purpose	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6.Stating results or claims	1 20%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 20%
Total	2 40%	1 20%	2 40%	0	0	0	0	0	5 100%

APPENDIX E
SAMPLES OF DISCUSSION SECTIONS OF AMERICAN
MASTER'S THESIS

American master's thesis#6

Discussion

Although holistic assessment involves scoring a text based on its overall impression rather than on the strengths and weaknesses of different aspects of the writing, this research found that specific text features, specifically grammatical error, were correlated with holistic assessment outcomes. There are many ways to interpret this correlational relationship.

Cumming (1985), Homburg (1984), and Vaughan (1991), in their research, pointed out that raters typically rely upon some methodology, often internalized and based in the subconscious, to guide them as they assess a text. Homburg explained that while raters consider many characteristics while conducting holistic assessments, they often “categorize” the compositions of NNS based on specific features (p. 102). There are indeed many features that raters might use as important influences in their holistic assessments. The results of this study corroborate the findings by Barkaoui (2010).

Huang & Foote (2010), Sakyi (2000) Sweedler-Brown (1993), Weltig (2004), as well as others, suggesting that grammatical error may at least be one of such features. In other words, this research supports the notion that raters may make broad generalizations about the overall quality of a text based on its grammatical accuracy. Yet, the existence of a correlation between grammatical error and holistic scores and the idea that raters may generalize based on the extent of grammatical error in a text does not negate research indicating that a variety of text features can affect holistic assessments. Barakoui (2010), Breland and Jones (1984), Freedman & Calfee (1983), Huang (2009), Pula & Huot (1993), and Sweedler-Brown (1993) concluded that content, organization, development, and overall communicative quality were important factors affecting raters' holistic judgments. Huang (2009), citing research by Cumming, Mendelsohn & Cumming, Reid & O'Brien, Russifkoff, and Sakyi, made mention of the fact that many variables, including grammar and mechanics, rhetoric, content, overall organization, and overall communicative quality, can impact holistic scores.

This study does not deny the influence of several different factors. It maintains, however, that grammatical accuracy does have a moderate impact on holistic scores.

Another important consideration is the role of overall writing proficiency in holistic scoring. Nonnative English writers who have better control over English grammar may also have higher general levels of English proficiency, and higher proficiency levels may impact many aspects of a composition. Hence, the correlation between high grammatical correctness scores and holistic scores may actually be an outcome of proficiency levels. Homburg (1984), in his study of approximately 3,500 compositions that resulted in correlations between objective measures of writing proficiency, including grammatical error, and holistic scores, speculated that the impact of objective measures would diminish as writing proficiency improved. In other words, as ELLs become more proficient in many different dimensions of writing, the role of objective measures such as grammar may become less important. This study did not generate enough data to support Homburg's assertion that objective measures become less influential as proficiency levels increase. In fact, of the three highest holistic scores in this sample, two of the essays also had relatively high correctness scores, though the correctness score of the other essay was well below the mean correctness score of 7.65. The high level of correctness on the essays with the top holistic scores may be partially explained by the fact that students who have developed grammatical accuracy have also developed other desirable and important writing skills. This may also help account for the correlation between grammatical accuracy and passing holistic essay exam scores.

Furthermore, the role of overall communicative quality cannot be minimized. Communicative quality and comprehensibility are typically important factors included in holistic assessment scoring guides, and a text's communicative quality is greatly affected by its readability and comprehensibility, which in turn is affected by error. Nas (1975) recognized the importance of error and delineated three levels of spelling, lexical, and grammatical errors according to their impact on readability (as cited in Homburg, 1984, p. 94). Accordingly, texts that are characterized by severe and frequent grammatical error can result in distortions that compromise comprehensibility, and overall communicative quality, since comprehensibility is impacted by what occurs at the sentence level. Much research, including this study, has revealed a relationship between sentence-level error and holistic assessment. Raforth and Rubin commented on the powerful influence of what

they called “sentence-level quality” on raters’ perceptions of writing, and McDaniel acknowledged the importance of grammar, finding that untrained raters of ESL texts were particularly strongly affected by error (as cited by Sweedler-Brown, 1993: 5).

Holling (2004), Huang (2009), Perkins (1980), Santos (1988), Sweedler-Brown (1993), and Weltig (2004) also found sentence-level errors to play a role in the holistic scoring of ESL texts, though the exact strength or nature of such was not conclusively determined.

This study, though not focusing on the effect of different classes of errors, produced correlations between grammatical error, in general, and holistic scoring of a similar magnitude of the correlations found by Breland and Jones (1984) in their research examining the relationship between types of error and holistic assessment. Breland and Jones revealed moderate correlations between holistic scoring and error, particularly pronoun usage ($r=0.41$) and parallel construction ($r=0.37$), as well as correlations between holistic scoring and punctuation and idiomatic usage ($r=0.29$ for each).

In spite of the evidence this study produced supporting a moderate correlation between grammar and holistic scores, it is imperative to keep in mind research on the effect of rater characteristics on holistic scoring. Several studies have shown that tolerance to error varies among raters. The raters participating in this study were all experienced in teaching English to ELLs and trained in assessing ELL writing. It can therefore be assumed, as pointed out by Huot (1993), McDaniel (1985), Weigle (1998), Sweedler-Brown (1993), and Vaughan (1991), that as experienced raters, they were not overly reactive to error. Huang, Janopoulos, Santos, and Vann et al. indicated that raters’ tolerance of error affected the consistency of their assessments of ESL compositions (as cited in Huang & Foote, 2010, p. 221). Research also has shown impacts of other rater-related factors, such as discipline, gender, age, and native language, on holistic scoring. Hence, different raters may have different reactions to grammatical errors in texts. This, again, has implications for the generalizability of this study’s findings. Of final interest is the correlation found between grammatical errors and passing and failing holistic scores. While there appears to be less research on this matter, this finding has important implications and suggests that ELLs with less

grammatical proficiency may be at higher risk of failure when holistic assessment is employed to evaluate their writings.

APPENDIX F
SAMPLES OF DISCUSSION SECTIONS OF THAI MASTER'S
THESIS

Thai master's thesis#6

1. Discussion of the Results

1.1 The EFL learners have a higher motivation to learn English than the ESL learners

The results of the questionnaire demonstrate that Thai EFL and ESL learners have both integrative and instrumental motivation. Gardner (1985) states that motivation refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language along with favorable attitudes towards learning that language. It was discovered that the limitations in their supporting environment with the EFL learners may not be a obstacle in learning a foreign language. They still like to practice English by themselves even though they are not forced to communicate. English is used at their ease because of their motivation. The questionnaire results show the EFL learners have a higher integrative and instrumental motivation than the ESL learners. In my opinion, it may be because the EFL learners are not in an English speaking environment all the time, they may have a stronger desire to push themselves to develop their English ability in situations that do not force them to use English more than the ESL learners, who do not need to find an opportunity to use English. More desire, more motivation. According to the interview results, the seven types of motivation (1) internal interest, (2) achievement, (3) learning situation, (4) going abroad, (5) social responsibility, (6) personal development, and (7) information media (Chun-huan, 2010) which are likely to happen among the Thai EFL and ESL learners, do not occur in sequence. Any type of motivation happens at particular times depending on the learners' goals, situation and interest.

1.2 The learning style preferences of the EFL and ESL learners are almost the same

The results indicate that most EFL students' learning style preferences are similar to those of ESL learners. The learners mentioned that a variety of ways of learning is profitable for them. Role-playing and group learning are preferred by EFL learners. Reading by oneself and discussing in groups are the preferred learning styles of ESL learners.

In other words, the questionnaire results show that Tactile and Group learning are the two learning styles most preferred by Thai EFL and ESL learners. Auditory and Individual learning are the two least preferred learning styles of the EFL and ESL learners. Role-playing (Kinesthetic style) in the interview results, is presented as the other preferable learning style of the EFL learners. That is probably because the EFL learners' classmates are Thai, so they may have less feeling of anxiety when they are playing roles in the classroom compared to ESL learners who study in a foreign society. Therefore, the ESL learners probably feel a little strange when they play roles in front of the foreign classmates.

Learning styles are learners' customary pre-disposition towards processing information in a certain manner (Skehan, 1991). Different learners, whether as a result of heredity, educational background, situational requirements, age, or other factors, understand and process information differently (Lawrence, 1993). Some learners, for instance, prefer to hear information (auditory learners), while others prefer to see it (visual learners).

The different styles of learning may related to the background of the EFL and ESL learners, for example, EFL learners cannot use English all the time, whenever they have the chance to practice their English (especially in EFL classrooms), they may feel stimulated to learn. Therefore, the preferred style of EFL students' learning is role playing in class. On the other hand ESL learners are surrounded by people who speak English, both in classroom and after finishing class. Possibly, the ESL learners usually have conversations with classmates and friends and this can be a reason why ESL learners prefer to have discussions in groups.

The educational field that learners attend is maybe another factor that causes differences between EFL and ESL learners. In this paper, EFL learners have studied Master of Arts and ESL learners Master of Business Administration. Consequently, the preferred way of learning may match the subject the learners have studied.

1.3 Only the EFL learners believe learning motivation has effect on their learning style

This research attempted to discover whether or not language learning motivation affects Thai EFL and ESL learners' learning style preferences by using semi-structured interviews designed by the author. The results indicate the EFL learners believe learning motivation can affect learning style. In contrast, the ESL learners do not agree with this idea.

Veronica's (2008) research conclusion indicated that motivation is a crucial factor in learning a foreign language, study ethic is influenced by different variables: personality variables, the attitudes of learners, their learning styles, and even power relationships between languages. Orwig (2003) stated that learning in your preferred learning style increases motivation and effectiveness.

In relation to the studies of Veronica (2008) and Orwig (2003) I disagree that learning motivation can affect learning style, because motivation can change over time. But the learning styles can change or cannot change. They depend on varied teaching styles. The learner may consider scores to be attained when attending a class and therefore, they may better follow the teaching style in order to get the higher score. On the other hand, I consider that learning style influences learning motivation. If the students learn in their preferred style, the learning outcome will be better because they learn the way they prefer without being forced and feeling anxious. That can strengthen the learners' attention in class. Happiness in learning can lead to better results.

1.4 Motivation and learning styles varies according to learning situation

The results indicate that EFL and ESL learners have similar instrumental and integrative motivations, but each type of motivation relies on a learners' situation, goals and interests.

According to Brown (2000), integrative and instrumental motivation both occurred with foreign or second language learners. He pointed out that both integrative and instrumental motivation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. He cited the example of international students residing in the United States, learning English for academic purposes while at the same time wishing to become integrated with the people and culture of the country.

This paper presents that instrumental and integrative motivation are not essential to appear at the same time but are necessary dependent on the particular goals of learners at a given time. For example, in this study, one of the EFL learners learnt on a Master's Degree in an English Program in order to develop her academic English language in class in the first semester, in the second semester of her Master's degree she emphasized learning English for communicating with clients, instead. However, the two types of motivation can also occur at the same time. For example, from the results of this paper, one of the ESL learners learnt English language for achieving a Masters Degree, but after entering the school he learnt English to communicate with English native speakers.

In addition, learning style preference can be varied depending on learning situations. In this paper, learning style can be divided into six styles (Reid, 1984) and the styles also are influenced by learning situations. The EFL and ESL learners have varied styles. One style is more preferable than other styles. For example, one of the EFL learners prefers Kinesthetic and Group learning styles more than Auditory and Individual because the active classroom and stimulating atmosphere keep the learner's attention in class more than when a teacher gives a lecture and each student is focused merely on their own text book.