

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this study was to find out students' opinion on the instruction in writing English in English foundation courses; therefore, the research methodology fell under the instruments which required its samples to express their opinions. An attitudinal scale became a tool in a survey questionnaire to gather data. After reviewing literature in relevant fields, in this chapter the researcher elaborated on research procedures, the population and samples, research instruments, the construction of instruments, the data collection and the data analysis.

Research procedures

In order to meet the objectives of the study, the researcher followed the procedures as shown below:

Step 1 Proposal and design: Since this study was sponsored by the Faculty of Education in Silpakorn University, the researcher was required to submit a proposal to seek for an approval from the faculty's research committee. Then, the researcher reviewed all relevant literature, designed two research instruments and determined the population and samples.

Step 2 Conduct of the research: The researcher started collecting data as planned. The samples were asked to fill in the survey questionnaire and some of them were interviewed. The quantitative and qualitative data were analysed by means of the statistic and content analysis. The results were summarised and discussed later on.

Step 3 Final report: The results and any other information gathered during the first and second steps were reported. It consisted of five chapters: an introduction, literature review, methodology, results and conclusions, discussions and recommendations.

Population and samples

Population : The population of this study was the first year students who enrolled in the English II course and had passed the English I course in the 2010 academic year. They were students from the two faculties of Silpakorn University at Sanam Chandra Palace campus located in Nakorn Pathom: the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Engineering and Industrial Technology. The TEFL section of the Faculty of Education, where the researcher was one of the teaching team members, was in charge of teaching English foundation courses for both faculties. The students were asked to fill in a survey questionnaire and some of them were interviewed.

Samples: The samples were selected by means of the simple random sampling technique. The sample size of this study relied on the strategy offered by Kerlinger—10 – 15% of the number of population in thousands (as cited in Nilapan, 2006 : 116). However, the researcher decided to have the sample size of this study at 25% of the population since the whole population was 1,803 students. The decision was made according to the following reasons: (1) the whole population was not too large; (2) this study would maintain the most validity and reliability; and (3) all of the surveys delivered to class teachers might not be returned. Table 3.1 shows a number of students who enrolled in the English II course in the 2010 academic year.

Table 3.1 Number of students who enrolled English II course.

Faculty	No of students	Sample size (25%)
Engineering and Industrial Technology	1,416	354
Education	387	97
Total	1,803	451

Source: SU webpage (<http://reg.su.ac.th/register/home.asp>)

For quantitative data: The samples were selected by means of the simple random sampling technique. The number of students and the classed selected were shown in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 on the next page.

Tables 3.2 Classes and number of students in the Faculty of Education .

Section	Number of students	Selected*	Section	Number of students	Selected*
601	34	*	607	39	
602	39		608	46	
603	41	*	609	41	*
604	-		610	31	
605	39	*	611	36	
606	41				

First, the population was stratified into two groups according to the two faculties. The researcher randomly selected classrooms and then added up the number of the students to find the percentage points of all students (see Table 3.2). The number of classes selected was four, in which 155 students were given the survey. The number represented 40.05% of the Education students.

Table 3.3 Classes and number of students in the Faculty of Engineering .

Section	Number of students	Selected*	Section	Number of students	Selected*
901	37		921	30	
902	30		922	38	
903	40	*	923	35	*
904	38	*	924	38	*
905	22		925	35	
906	30		926	29	
907	35		927	38	
908	26		928	38	*
909	39		929	41	
910	23		930	38	
911	29		931	31	
912	39	*	932	38	
913	37		933	36	*
914	37	*	934	45	
915	40		935	34	*
916	41	*	936	37	
917	39		937	36	
918	37		938	34	

Section	Number of students	Selected*		Section	Number of students	Selected*
919	38			939	36	
920	37	*		940	35	

From Table 3.3, eleven classrooms with 452 students were randomly selected from the Faculty of Engineering. This number represented 31.92% of the students in this faculty. Since the researcher found that the number of the students in the Faculty of Education was high enough, another classroom was not then selected. It was expected that in the end of the data gathering the numbers in both faculties would represent the percentage point accepted to yield the validity and reliability of the research.

For qualitative data: The other method of data collection was individual interviews and a focus group. For the individual interviews, three students from each faculty were selected by means of the non-proportional stratified sampling technique. These represented the students whose English competence varied from top, average and to low levels. To illustrate, the researcher listed students in three groups: those from each faculty earning an A, those earning a B or C+ and those earning a D or D+ from the English I course. At that point, one student from each group was randomly selected. Therefore, six students were selected for the individual interviews. For the focus group, five representatives from both faculties were selected by means of the random sampling technique to form a focus group. So that the samples for this data collection could connect their responses to the quantitative data collection, the same classes selected for the survey questionnaire were randomly selected again.

Research instruments

Two instruments were used to gather data for this study. Both were aimed to gain quantitative and qualitative information.

1. A survey questionnaire: The survey consisted of three parts: the demographic data, the opinion on the instruction in writing English in the English I and II courses and students' preferred method of being taught English writing. There was also an open-ended question to ask for additional comments from the respondents. However, this instrument was mainly aimed to gather quantitative data.

2. An interview: The interview consisted of fifteen questions which paralleled to those in the survey questionnaire. It was aimed to gather qualitative data in both individual interviews and a focus group discussion.

Construction of instruments

In order to generate research instruments, an initial survey had been used to draw students' responses, some of which were included in the questionnaire. The initial survey was comprised of four open-ended questions (see Appendix 3.1 Preliminary open-ended survey). These questions asked about students' general opinion. The students could write as many responses as possible on the space provided. Question 1 tried to gain information about students' problems concerning their writing skills. For Question 2, students were asked to reveal the roles of class teachers they expected in classrooms to help them. Question 3 asked about students' favourite topics for writing tasks. Finally, Question 4 tried to draw the responses which students might want to propose a solution to their problems to their class teachers.

After creating the four questions, the researcher selected students from two English I classes by means of the purposive sampling technique. One was the class of 35 Engineering students, and the other was the class of 33 Education students, all of whom were asked to fill in the survey. The results are presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Results from preliminary survey

Question	Response	Frequency
1. What problems do you have in writing English?	Small scope of vocabulary	44
	Accuracy of grammar	43
	Unable to generate meaningful sentences	15
	Spelling	7
	No ideas to write about	7
	Not know many expressions / idioms	5
	Coherence	4
	No time to complete assignments	2
	Mechanism / punctuation	1
2. How do you need your class teacher to help in order to diminish the problems?	Focus on grammar	23
	Focus on vocabulary / idioms	20
	Teach how to write step-by-step	5
	Clarify marks of errors	4
	Give more writing exercises	3

Question	Response	Frequency
	Teach how to write sentences	3
	Teach slowly	2
	Create pleasant atmosphere during classes	2
	Speak Thai in classes	1
	Show a lot of examples of writing	1
	Teach how to organise ideas	1
3. What topic do you prefer for writing tasks? (You may write more than one answer)	Traveling	17
	Personal information	14
	Hometown	5
	Family	5
	Friends	4
	Environment, pets	2
	Human behaviour, entertainment, jobs, conversations in various situations, personal opinions, hobbies, model people, food	1
4. How do you prefer your teacher to teach writing lessons? These teaching methods would help you improve your writing skills and create positive atmosphere in your classroom.	Give more new vocabulary	11
	Focus on grammar, structures before assigning tasks	11
	Use various activities and assign different kinds of tasks: role play, songs, quiz; integrate all skills	10
	Have students practice writing by the process: prewriting, outline, drafts, teacher's feedback, explanation of feedback	10
	Give more tasks, have students write journal	7
	Teach how to write from easy to difficult principles	7
	Show good examples	6
	Create friendly, enjoyable classes	5
	Personalise topics, pointing out usefulness of writing for students' future careers; let students create their own topics	3
	Use variety of teaching aids; mark without grades;	2

Question	Response	Frequency
	teach how to translate	
	Teach slowly; teach with a sense of humour; teach how to organise ideas; communicate in English all the time; communicate in Thai sometime; provide tutorial sessions for individual students	1

According to Table 3.4, the answers from Question 1 “What problems do you have in writing?” contributed to the choices for Question 10 ‘Write Number 1 – 8 (or 9) to show the order of the importance of the following problems that you may have in writing’ on the questionnaire. The choices, written for the respondents to select, included vocabulary, grammar, spelling, ideas and content, idioms and expressions, coherence and punctuation. Other than that, the researcher added more choices possible to be problems in writing English: organisation, punctuation and transitional markers.

Question 2 ‘How do you need your class teacher to help in order to diminish the problems?’ contributed to the choices for Question 30 ‘Write Number 1 – 8 (or 9) to put in order the following items you prefer your teachers’ feedback to focus on’ on the questionnaire. The choices included grammar, vocabulary, organisation and content. The researcher also added other items in order to have a parallel pattern with Question 10 on the questionnaire. Moreover, other responses for Question 2 on the preliminary survey had been written as items for the attitudinal scale. Those items included ‘Teachers’ feedback is clear and easy to understand,’ and ‘I prefer my teacher to explain the feedback to me face-to-face.’

To gain ideas of students’ favourite topics for writing tasks, the researcher asked Question 3 ‘What topic do you prefer for writing tasks?’ on the preliminary survey. The applicable topics, included in Question 12 on the survey questionnaire, were tourist attractions, hometown, family, friends, pets, entertainment, hobbies, jobs and food. The item ‘traveling’ was changed to ‘tourist attractions’ for fear that the first might be too wide and it might become a subtopic for ‘hobbies,’ whereas the topic ‘tourist attractions’ was specific enough. The researcher, in addition, added more topics, such as social problems, sports, politics, which showed a variety of choices with a broad range of possibilities.

The last question on the preliminary survey ‘How do you prefer your teacher to teach writing lessons?’ was aimed to draw students’ favourite teaching methods for writing English. The responses were used as items for the attitudinal scale. Those items included ‘The steps of writing in the material can improve my writing skills: reading, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing’ and ‘I want my teacher to teach me from the very beginning, such as how to construct sentences, how to use conjunctions, etc.’

After the results of the preliminary survey had been analysed, the researcher gained some information for generating statements or items for the survey questionnaire. In addition, the researcher searched similar studies for statements to be used in the questionnaire expected to fulfill useful information for this area of study. Details of the making of questions and statements are shown in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5 Information drawn from other studies for constructing the survey questionnaire

References	Information drawn
Grubbs & Jantarach (2007 : 147 – 151)	Questions from Tables 4, 6 and 7 - How much time have you spent in a foreign country? - What was your last English grade in high school? - Have you ever studied at any language school?
Demetriades (2002 : 97)	Items from Appendix A: the questionnaire EG332 Pre Research survey, participant profile - Number of writing courses taken at your university - Number of writing courses taken outside your university - Have you ever lived in an English speaking country? If yes, for how long?
Hansen et. al. (2006 : 499)	Items from Appendix E: writing apprehension survey items with mean student rating - I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in writing - I enjoy writing - I'm nervous about writing - I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated - I don't like my compositions to be evaluated
Tessema, K. A. (2005 : 28)	Items from Appendix: Student feedback questionnaire - Work at each step was set up clearly - Some of the tasks were confusing
Diab (2006 : 9)	Items from Appendix 1: Instructor questionnaire and response frequencies - When responding to the first draft, the teacher should always: point out errors in grammar, spelling, vocabulary choice, punctuation, organisation of the paper, the writing style and the ideas expressed
Hamp-Lyons (1991 : 116)	Topics from Table 6.1 Categories of comments made by raters from the article 'Holistic assessment: What goes on in the rater's mind?' by Vaughan C (1991 : 111 – 125) - Organisation - Content - Grammar - Coherence

Some questions and items for constructing the survey questionnaire were drawn from other studies in the related field (see Table 3.5). For example, Grubbs and Jantarach (2007 : 147 – 150) and Demetriades (2002 : 97) presented in their studies various questions about background knowledge of learning English or time spent on exposure to English. They could be used for the part that asked about respondents' demographic data. Other questions or items contributed to categories of questions or items could be adapted as well: time (period for each step or task, deadlines); procedures (reading to find schema, reading to help write an outline); how to give feedback (on every error, only on vocabulary / grammar / organisation / content, correction symbols); a number of tasks; materials (topics, reading passages, difficulty); and grading (clear criteria, no grade, weights).

The survey questionnaire was then completed. At the same time, the researcher set up questions for the interview. They were drawn from the questions and items on the survey questionnaire, so that the data to be gathered would be parallel. In other words, the responses from the survey questionnaire might not be as clear in terms of qualitative data. The responses from the interview were hoped to fulfill clarifications needed. Before presenting the next step, the researcher would like to present steps in constructing the instruments as shown in Figure 3.1 on the next page.

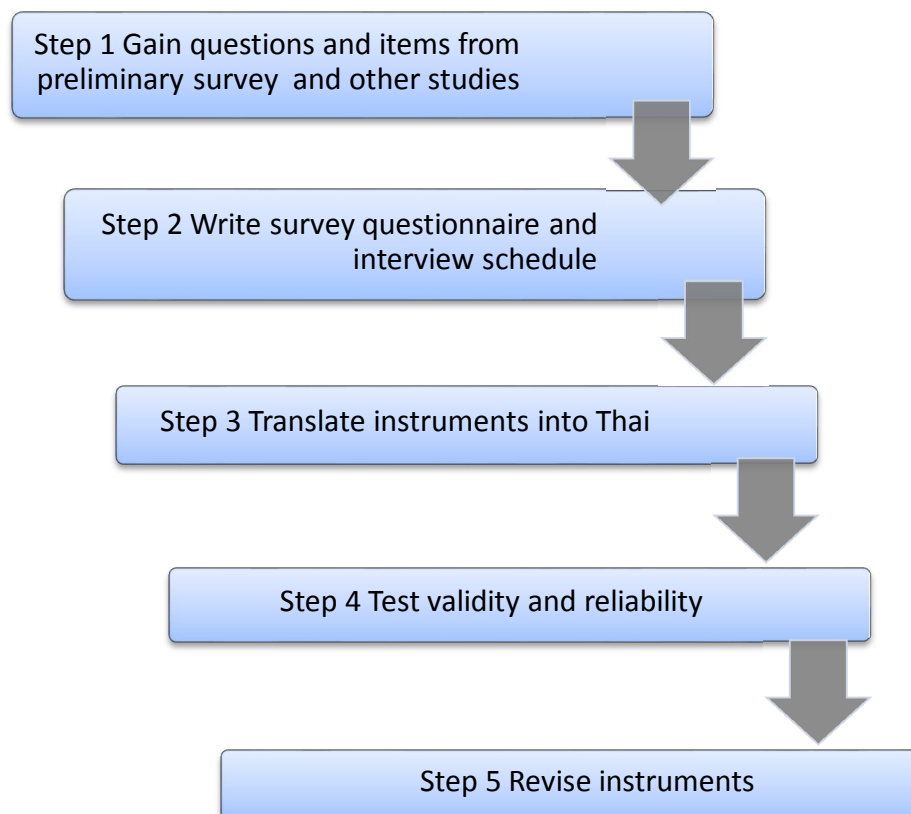


Figure 3.1: Steps in constructing the instruments

As can be seen on Figure 3.1, after the two instruments were constructed, they must be translated into Thai. The reason for this was that at the final stage of data collection, the samples would have to fill in the survey of their first language—Thai. The researcher had better change the instruments to the version mostly used at this step. Another reason was that the experts should see the instruments in the version they would be used for the most valid and reliable results.

The next step was to test validity and reliability of the instruments. Details were shown below:

1. *Validity*. The researcher asked three experts in the fields of statistics, research and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) to test the content validity and IOC (Index of Item Objective Congruence). The experts had received both instruments. After that, the researcher studied their comments and results of the IOC (see Appendix 3.2) to make changes. Please note that the results were translated back into English for this report.

The total average IOC results from the three experts were 0.92 and 0.98 for the survey questionnaire and the interview, respectively. They were at a high level. Therefore, the statements and the questions constructed for the instruments were valid. In other words, they were set to ask for the data, for which this study and its objectives were designed. However, some comments from the experts were also taken into account. The researcher decided to make changes later after considering the results of the reliability testing below.

2. *Reliability*. The researcher had consulted with a statistics expert Asst Prof Dr Chaiyod Paiwitsiritham on how to test the reliability of the instruments. He recommended that only the attitudinal scale on Part 2 of the survey questionnaire be tested by a statistic method on the SPSS software called the Reliability Coefficients. Two classes of students were selected by the purposive sampling technique in the second term of the 2009 academic year; therefore, these samples would not be repeated for the actual data collection. Though the results (see Appendix 3.3) showed that the discriminatory power was high at .7997, the expert figured out that the corrected item-total correlation of two items scored lower. The items were “I feel confused with the material” and “I am discouraged when earning low grades for writing tasks.” They were deleted and the score increased to .8385, accordingly. That enhanced the reliability of the instrument.

Apparently, these two items should be removed because the experts testing the validity expressed their concerns as well on the IOC results. Other than that, no other serious comments were added, just a few word choice recommendations, which were corrected in the Thai version already.

At the final step, the researcher could complete the two instruments, including a survey questionnaire and an interview. They were later on translated back into English for this report. An expert in translation checked all the instruments for the English and Thai versions. Furthermore, a native speaker proofread the

finished English version (see Appendix 3.4). Those experts were Asst Prof Sinn Paksuwan and Ajarn Roger Hooper.

Data collection

The following steps were for collecting data:

1. The researcher sent official letters to the deans of the two faculties in order to seek their approvals. The letters notified that the samples would reveal their opinions by following three procedures: filling in the survey questionnaires, being interviewed individually and participating in a focus group.

2. After the permission for the data collection was approved, the researcher contacted the teachers whose classes were selected and informed them of dates, times and places they could pick up the survey questionnaire. The instrument was placed at the Education Office because these teachers, some of whom were part-time teachers, regularly turned up to sign their names on their teaching days.

3. Next, the researcher picked up the survey questionnaire left at the office by the class teachers. According to the tight schedule, some class teachers expressed that they had their students complete the questionnaire out of class time. As mentioned earlier, the data collection had been conducted at the end of the second term in 2011, considered the 2010 academic year, hence the time constraint for class teachers.

Table 3.6 Number of returned surveys

Faculty	No of students	No of surveys given	No of surveys returned	Percentage of surveys returned to no of students
Education	387	155	139	35.92%
Engineering and Industrial Technology	1,416	452	305	21.54%
Total	1,803	607	444	24.63%

Table 3.6 shows the return rate of the survey given to the samples. As for the Faculty of Education, the percentage point of the surveys returned was high at 35.92%, much higher than expected. The Engineering students, on the other hand, returned 305 surveys, which was 21.54% of the total number. Finally, a number of 444 surveys were returned, which accounted for 24.63% of all students who enrolled in the English II course in the 2010 academic year. The researcher had anticipated that not all of the surveys given might be returned.

The researcher did not precipitate the class teachers into collaborating in this step because the percentage point of the surveys returned was acceptable enough for the sampling design which was 25%.

Data analysis

After the survey questionnaires had been returned from the samples, the data was transferred onto an SPSS file for the data analysis. The quantitative data was analysed by means of the frequencies, percentage points, mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D). Moreover, other means were also used to compare the demographic data of the samples with their opinion on the instruction in writing English in English foundation courses as shown in Table 3.7. As for the qualitative data, the researcher adopted the content analysis.

Table 3.7 Data analysis

Instrument	Detail	Data analysis
Survey questionnaire	Part 1: demographic data	- Frequencies
	Part 3: Students' preferred method of being taught English writing	- Percentage points
	Part 2: Opinion on the instruction in writing English in the English I and II courses (attitudinal scale)	- Mean (\bar{X}) - Standard deviation (S.D.)
	Comparisons between the demographic data and the opinion	- Mean (\bar{X}) - Standard deviation (S.D.) - t-Test - F-test (ANOVA)
Interview	Open-ended questions	- Content analysis

To illustrate, the attitudinal scale was set up to ask for the samples' level of satisfaction or appropriateness of items in 5 levels: strongly agree, agree, no opinion/unable to answer, disagree and strongly disagree. The mean score was analysed at five levels:

Mean	4.50 – 5.00	a very high level
	3.50 – 4.49	a high level
	2.50 – 3.49	a medium level

1.50 – 2.49	a low level
1.00 – 1.49	a very low level

The research design as shown above resulted in the finding of the data the researcher aimed to collect. It, then, was analysed as planned and was presented in the next chapter.