L1 Transfer on Thai EFL Learners' Utilization of Prepositions: a Corpus-Based Analysis

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Abstract

Many language scholars such as Kurk and Atay (2007) and Latif (2007) addressed that the most difficult task of EFL students is to write in English especially use of prepositions. Hence, the study aimed to investigate the misuse of prepositions and to identify interferences of first language (L1) features appearing in written productions of Thai EFL learners. Twenty participants were first-year Srinakharinwirot university majoring in Education (English). One hundred twenty written works were collected and established as a corpus of Thai EFL learners' written work. The concordance feature of the AntConc program was utilized to examine the errors of preposition use based on preposition errors classification by Burt, Dulay, and Krashen (1982). Moreover, some contrastive analysis techniques were applied to identify the interference of mother tongue toward participants' preposition use on their written works. The findings were cross-checked by two EFL instructors and shown that there were misuse (100 times, 70.92%), addition (21 times, 14.89%) and omission (20 times, 14.18%) of prepositions found in the corpus. The most problematic English prepositions found in the corpus were 'in', 'to', 'of', 'at', 'with', 'for', 'by', 'about', 'on' and 'from', respectively. Furthermore, there were two mother tongue features that were semantic-related and syntactic-related L1 interference which interfered the preposition use of Thai EFL learners. Thus, it is an English language teachers' responsibility to raise the awareness of the differences between mother tongue language and target language to Thai EFL learners during the writing lessons in order to overcome the problem of misuse of prepositions. Moreover, corpus program could be considered as one of the beneficial tools which assists Thai EFL students to reflect and learn from their written errors, as well as they could overcome their misuse of prepositions.

Keywords: L1 Transfer, Misuse of Prepositions, Corpus Study, Contrastive Analysis

Introduction

With the arrival of the ASIAN Economic Community (AEC), which has been effective since the 31st of December 2015, English has grown into a medium of communication among people who work in the AEC as well as in Thailand. Thus, it is an urgent matter for Thai students to be able to master the English language in order to survive in the business industry. Bennui (2008) noted that most Thai EFL learners cannot think in English when producing English writing or speaking because of the difference in structure and usage between Thai and English. Consequently, their mother tongue language sometimes interferes with their English writing. The enhancement of English writing proficiency has been debated continuously in EFL learning by language scholars and educators for many decades. Bennui (2008) stated that the most significant obstacles for attaining English writing skills are the intricacy of English syntax, lexical words, and discourse. More importantly, language teachers are likely to ignore the interference of learners' first language and culture towards their English writing education. EFL learners have always faced the problem of interference from their L1, because their L1 structure and grammar does not share similar characteristics of the English language (Barrett and Chen, 2011).

Analyzing language transfer by utilizing contrastive analysis (CA) is the main and widely used approach. Richards and Schmidt (2002) stated that this analysis focuses on contrasting sound and structure systems between the native and target language of language learners to solve target language teaching problems. CA was widely known and performed in teaching target language. This approach was developed based

on structural linguistics. Its assumptions are described as below

1. Language transfer or interference of native language is the main obstacles in target language education.

2. Contrastive analysis can classify those obstacles.

3. Learning materials of the target language should be designed based on contrastive analysis to eradicate the problems of language transfer.

English prepositions and articles are considered the most difficult elements for EFL learners to utilize correctly and acquire like native speakers. They are the most common types of grammatical errors produced by EFL learners (Chodorow, Gamon and Tetreault, 2010). Several language scholars such as Dalgish (1985); Diab (1997) and Izumi et al. (2003) have reported that EFL learners' misuse of prepositions and articles constituted between 20% to 50% of all grammatical errors occurring in written discourse. In Asia, Tetreault and Chodorow (2008) also claimed that the misuse of prepositions is the most typical type of grammatical error produced by EFL learners. This finding might be perceived as supporting evidence in common mistakes found in written discourse of EFL learners, including those in Thailand. EFL studies on the misuse of prepositions have provided evidence that EFL learners commonly tend to produce mistakes in utilizing English prepositions. This may be because communication usually does not breakdown even though EFL learners might use incorrect prepositions while communicating in English (Brender, 2002). Nevertheless, the misuse of prepositions might increase the degree of ambiguity for the reader. In fact, the acquisition of correct usage of prepositions is quite difficult, since there are complex features of prepositions in terms of their variety. English prepositions also serve an extensive diversity of linguistic functions (Tetreault and Chodorow, 2008).

The learning of prepositions in the EFL context has been examined for many years in order to eliminate this problem for EFL students. The interference of EFL students' native language is one crucial obstacle in attaining the target language. However, there have been few studies on the influence of the Thai language toward Thai EFL students, in particular with undergraduate students with a beginners level of writing skills. In addition, the corpus analysis has played a significant role in analyzing language and opened an opportunity to assist language scholars in analyzing language in a new perspective. Thus, the influence of L1 on the use of prepositions by Thai EFL learners, which is analyzed based on corpus analysis, will be performed in order to fill the gap of EFL studies and provide valuable information to assist language teachers and EFL students in overcoming problems of learning the English language.

From the above, this leads to the following research questions:

1. Which English prepositions do Thai EFL learners frequently misuse?

2. Which mother tongue features appear in Thai EFL learners' misuse of prepositions?

Language Transfer

The definition of L1 interference in relation to the terms 'cross-linguistic and language transfer' could be defined as the effect of learners' native language structures on their performance and improvement in the target language education (Hashim, 1999). During the interlanguage process, while learners are producing written discourse, some of their native language features emerge in their target language writing pieces. This phenomenon should be considered as a vital problem in EFL learning, especially with respect to writing skills. EFL learners tend to utilize the direct translation strategy from their native language to the target language while writing in English. This action might cause errors in their English writing. This issue should be emphasized among EFL learners in order to raise their awareness and avoid utilizing their native language while learning English writing (Bennui, 2008).

Analyzing L1 Transfer

There are four approaches in analyzing language transfer of EFL learners: 'contrastive analysis' (CA), 'error analysis' (EA), 'interlanguage analysis' (IA), and 'contrastive rhetoric' (CR). These approaches can be identified based on the epistemological view that they have emerged from. CA was developed based on the traditional approach, EA and IA from the contemporary approach, and CR emerged from the modern approach (Bennui, 2008).

Among four approaches of analyzing language transfer, contrastive analysis was developed to assist language learners in consciously realizing the differences between their native and target languages. It is an appropriate approach for students at the beginning level of writing proficiency as mentioned by Richards and Schmidt (2002). Hence, contrastive analysis was utilized to examine preposition errors produced by Thai ELF learners who are at the beginning level of English writing proficiency. Moreover, they also mentioned that there are two L1 linguistic elements that cause the misuse of prepositions of language students which are semantic-related and syntactic-related interferences.

English and Thai Prepositions

There are some language scholars who are interested in studying English and Thai prepositions. Pongpairoj (2002) mentioned that Thai EFL students always had a problem of using English preposition 'in' and 'on'. She found that Thai students tended to have a fixed meaning of 'in' as /nai/ and 'on' as /bƏʊn/. It is the cause of the error of preposition use by Thai students, because some English prepositions sometimes have multiple meaning depending on context and following words. Moreover, Ruangjaroon (2015) classified order of English prepositions that Thai EFL students could acquire into 3 categories. First, Category A is prepositions that have one-to-one meaning

between English and Thai such as 'from' and 'with'. Category B is English prepositions that have multiple meaning in Thai such as 'in' and 'on'. Last, Category C is English prepositions that do not have any meaning in Thai. Furthermore, Chaiyaratana (1928) who is almost the very first scholar who compared English and Thai prepositions stated that there is one form of English and Thai preposition that shares the same similarity, but which at the same time may be problematic for Thai learners – the construction of a preposition + a noun phrase which indicates location. Some English prepositions can be directly translated to Thai prepositions. Nevertheless, English prepositions indicating location in some scenarios are controlled by the noun object, such as 'She stays on the campus', 'There is a bench on the lawn', and 'there is a bench in the yard'. In the Thai preposition system, there is no such rule to rely on the noun object. Any noun object can be placed before any preposition if it can refer to the intended meaning. Thus, Thai EFL students might face a problem of using the wrong preposition to a specific noun object such as 'She lives in the campus'. This is because Thai EFL learners tend to utilize the direct one-to-one translation strategy while producing English sentences. Hence, the preposition 'in' can be translated by Thai EFL students as 'Nai'. Moreover, some English prepositions can be misused as a verb of motion by Thai EFL students. For instance, 'She went at school' and 'She went in town'. They tend to use direct one-to-one translation of the preposition 'at' as 'Thi' and 'in' as 'Nai'. The concept of motion verbs can convey the action by itself in English. Notwithstanding, the concept of motion 'to' and 'into' may be problematic for Thai EFL learners who tend to use 'at' and 'in' instead.

The Classification of Preposition Errors

Burt et al. (1982) classified the preposition errors produced by EFL students into three types: misuse, omission, and addition. These kinds of errors are used

as a guideline for EFL teachers to identify the deviation of prepositions in EFL students' writing pieces. The classification of preposition errors is described below:

1. Misuse of prepositions is identified by using an incorrect preposition in a sentence. In fact, a correct preposition is wrongly replaced by an incorrect preposition in which both correct and incorrect prepositions are in the same category. Nevertheless, Estevez, Gomez, and Gonzalez (2010 as cited in Yuan, 2014) added that the misuse of prepositions can refer to any preposition that is wrongly used instead of using a correct preposition.

2. Omission of prepositions is identified by the act of omitting a preposition that should be placed in a sentence in order to produce a correct sentence. Specifically, the writer failed to write an essential element, which produces an incorrect understanding for the reader.

3. Addition of prepositions is identified by the act of adding an unnecessary preposition into an utterance, which causes an incorrect understanding for the readers /listeners. In fact, it is the opposite act of omission of a preposition. To be more specific, the writer/speaker adds a preposition that should not be placed in an utterance; that mentioned utterance does not require any preposition.

Methodology

The research utilized a corpus-based method for analyzing the deviation of prepositions produced by Thai EFL learners in writing class. First, EFL learners' writing papers were gathered during the first semester of the 2016 academic year in a basic writing course. After that, all obtained soft files of students' writing papers were uploaded to the AntConc version 3.4.3 computer software (Anthony, 2014) in order to transfer the data into concordance lines for examining the interference of L1 in the misuse of prepositions from EFL learners.

Research Instrument

This study employed the AntConc (Anthony, 2014) as a research instrument. According to Anthony (2004), the AntConc can process and illustrate obtained data in an interpretable display, therefore it is widely used in corpora studies. This computer software provides a user-friendly set of tools. AntConc version 3.4.3 is the newest version accessible while conducting this study. Moreover, there are four main features in this software: Word list, Collocates, Concordance, Keyword list and Clusters.

In terms of verifying reliability of this study's instrument, AntConc version 3.4.3 computer software (Anthony, 2014); Francis and Sinclair (1994) pointed out that data from corpus can present an incontrovertible evidence about how language is used by people. The data obtained from this study is a corpus of EFL students' written works. These data could be viewed as authentic texts that represent firm evidence for the study.

In terms of validity of the research, the obtained data from the data analysis was verified by a board comprised of three lecturers in the English language teaching field who have at least five years' experience in teaching writing at the Thai EFL undergraduate level.

Population and Sample

The population in this study was urban Thai college students majoring in Education (English) from closed public universities. Based on its accessibility, Srinakharinwirot University was chosen as the sample site. The participants in this study were first year students majoring in Education (English) from the Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University. The students are 18 years old. The participants are 8 males and 12 females. Their English writing skills are at the beginner level for English writing. According to the high school curriculum in Thailand, they have not learnt how to write academic English before the undergraduate level. According to Latif (2007), EFL

students who are at the beginning level of English proficiency tend to face the problem of the misuse of English prepositions. Therefore, these mentioned students majoring in Education (English) were purposely selected as a sample group in this study.

Data Collection

The procedure of data collection consists of two steps: during the semester, 20 participants submitted their written works twice a month in a soft file format in order to be uploaded to the AntConc. According to the basic writing syllabus, there are six topics that participants were assigned to write a paragraph assignment during the semester, which are definition, narration, description, process, opinion, and comparison /contrast. The paragraph length is at least half of an A4 page and the maximum length should not be over one page. Twice a week, students were informed of the topic of the assignments at the beginning of the lessons in order to encourage participants to simultaneously write a paragraph. The writing time was three hours in order to provide enough time for participants to write one paragraph. One-hundred-and-twenty pages of 20 participants' written works were stored in the AntConc to develop a corpus of Thai EFL written works. At the end of the semester, the obtained data were processed through AntConc in order to discover the frequency of propositions used by Thai EFL learners as well as identify errors found among a collection of paragraphs stored in the corpus. The next step is to identify errors, which are influenced by their Thai (native) language. Last, the results were cross-checked by two EFL instructors.

Data Analysis

After uploading all obtained students' written works to the AntConc, the wordlist feature of the AntConc was applied in order to identify the prepositions found in the corpus. This feature can illustrate the list of prepositions by frequency. The list of prepositions used by Thai EFL learners was established.

Research question one aims to investigate English prepositions that Thai EFL learners frequently misused. Therefore, the concordance feature of the AntConc was utilized in order to illustrate line by line of prepositions used from students' written works. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English's definitions of preposition selection and English preposition classified by Chalker (1984) were used to identify the misuse of prepositions found in the concordance line. The misuse of prepositions was categorized by Burt et al. (1982), who identified preposition errors produced by EFL students into three types: misuse, omission, and addition.

Research question two identified the mother tongue features appearing in Thai EFL learners' misuse of prepositions. In order to find this answer, contrastive analysis was used to detect misuse of prepositions that are influenced by the native language. The data obtained from the primary analysis was cross-checked by the two language undergraduate instructors who have at least five years of experience teaching EFL.

The Findings

The findings are presented according to the study's research question. According to English preposition categorized by Chalker (1984), there were 61 prepositions found on the corpus of Thai EFL written work. The frequency of prepositions used by Thai EFL students on the corpus was 13,866 times. The ten most frequently used prepositions were 'to' (3,218 times, M = 23.208%), 'of' (2,456 times, M = 17.712%), 'in' (2,264 times, M = 16.328%), 'for' (1,121 times, M = 8.085%), 'on' (597 times, M = 4.305%), 'by' (578 times, M = 4.168%), 'with' (564 times, M = 4.068%), 'from' (3,218 times, M = 23.208%), 'at' (324 times, M = 2.337%), 'about' (295 times, M = 2.128%).

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English's definitions of preposition selection and English prepositions categorized by

Chalker（1984）, which were used to identify the misuse of prepositions found in the concordance line, there were 21 prepositions that Thai EFL students wrongly used.

**Table 1** Frequency and Mean of Preposition Errors Classification

No.	Preposition Found	Number of Error	Types of Error	Example of error
1	in	33 (23.40%)	28 (misuse) 4 (addition) 1 (omission)	1. What would you like to have in dinner? (for, misuse) 2. they understand in the same thing. (x, addition) 3. She chose me to compete French speaking competition. (in, omission)
2	to	25 (17.73%)	10 (misuse) 5 (addition) 10 (omission)	1. It becomes to a new word. (x, addition) 2. We don't not want them answer you. (to, omission) 3. Antonymy can be categorized to two category. (into, misuse)
3	of	18 (12.76%)	10 (misuse) 1 (addition) 7 (omission)	1. But it is just a little words because their physical body. (of, omission), 2. Animals have an ability of learning their language. (to, misuse) 3. If you lack of responsibility. (x, addition)
4	at	12 (8.51%)	12 (misuse)	He was born at USA. (in, misuse)
5	with	10 (7.09%)	6 (misuse) 4 (addition)	1. Speaker want to refer people with thing. (to, misuse) 2. It is unneccessary to use the laws to solve with this problem. (x, addition)
6	for	9 (6.38%)	6 (misuse) 1 (addition) 2 (omission)	1. When I go for shopping with my mom. (x, addition) 2. The world has been devoted for growing GM crops. (to, misuse) 3. They hold the ceremony to thank you the God Sun. (for, omission)
7	by	9 (6.38%)	8 (misuse) 1 (addition)	1. It is combined by two words. (with, misuse) 2. We played, ate, studied, and even slept by each other. (x, addition)
8	about	6 (4.25%)	3 (misuse) 3 (addition)	1. This writing will discuss about the different between them. (x, addition) 2. HLDI's new findings about texting. (of, misuse)
9	on	4 (2.83%)	2 (misuse) 2 (addition)	1. There are two levels on human language. (of, misuse) 2. Genetically engineered products may affect on human health. (x, addition)
10	from	4 (2.83%)	4 (misuse)	One of the cases that was affected from these laws. (by, misuse)
11	into	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	It can be interpreted into 2 ways. (in, misuse)
12	before	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	She prepares before teaching everyday. (for, misuse *semantics)
13	between	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	Polysemy is the sameness of the meaning between the word (of, misuse)
14	since	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	Houses that were built since the 18th century. (in, misuse)
15	against	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	He studied his findings against more than 30 years of research. (for, misuse)
16	over	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	This ceremony will take the time over the midnight in the last day. (to, misuse)
17	around	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	If you are invited to sit around their table. (at, misuse)
18	through	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	He/She are walking through a dog. (pass by, misuse)

Table 1 (Cont.)

No.	Preposition Found	Number of Error	Types of Error	Example of error
19	among	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	There is an ancient village that is located among the huge valley. (in, misuse ไทย)
20	upon	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	Deciding whether uniforms are right for your child depends upon individual circumstances. (on, misuse)
21	across	1 (0.70%)	1 (misuse)	India which can also be seen across film, literature and entertainment. (in, misuse)

Table 1 illustrates the 21 prepositions that Thai EFL students wrongly used. The top ten of propositions that they had difficulty in using were 'in', 'to', 'of', 'at', 'with', 'for', 'by', 'about', 'on', and 'from', respectively. The total preposition errors was 141 found on the corpus which could be classified into misuse (100 times, 70.92%), addition (21 times, 14.89%) and omission (20 times, 14.18%). Next, Table 2 shows a graph of the categories of error of preposition use by Thai EFL students.

Table 2 Graph of the Categories of Error of Preposition Use of Thai EFL Students.
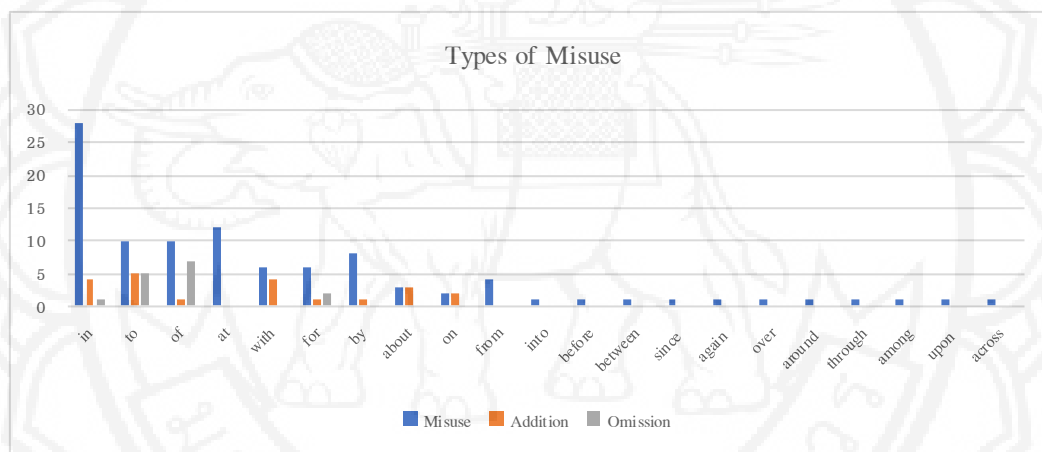
In terms of misuse, Thai EFL students made errors with 21 prepositions. The most misused prepositions are 'in', 'at', 'to', 'of', 'by', 'with', 'for' and 'from', respectively. Table 3 illustrates a list of prepositions that Thai EFL students misuse. This table also shows the means and frequencies of preposition misused by Thai EFL students.

Table 3 The Misuse of Prepositions by Thai EFL Students

No.	Preposition	Frequency of Misuse	Mean	Instead of the Corrected One
1	in	28	28%	on (18), of (5), at (4) and for (1)
2	to	10	10%	on (4), at (2), of (1), into (1), for (1) and with (1)
3	of	10	10%	in (4), for (2), to (2), between (1) and about (1)
4	at	24	24%	in (11), on (11), with (1) and to (1)
5	with	6	6%	to (3), in (1), for (1) and from (1)
6	for	6	6%	to (3), of (2) and on (1)
7	by	8	8%	of (5), with (2) and for (1)
8	about	3	3%	of (1), for (1) and on (1)
9	on	2	2%	of (1) and in (1)

Table 3 (Cont.)

No.	Preposition	Frequency of Misuse	Mean	Instead of the Corrected One
10	from	3	3%	by (3) and of (1)
11	into	1	1%	in (1)
12	before	1	1%	for (1)
13	between	1	1%	of (1)
14	since	1	1%	in (1)
15	against	1	1%	for (1)
16	over	1	1%	to (1)
17	around	1	1%	at (1)
18	through	1	1%	pass by (1)
19	among	1	1%	in (1)
20	upon	1	1%	on (1)
21	across	1	1%	in (1)
	Total	100	100%	

Table 3 illustrates that Thai EFL students tended to use 'in' instead of 'on' for writing their sentences 18 times (He was using the map 'in' his phone). They also wrongly used 'in' instead of 'of' five times (Cell phone becomes an important part 'in' daily life at this time) and 'at' four times (John Nash was a mathematic student 'in' Princeton University). Moreover, the preposition "at" is also problematic for Thai EFL students, since they used 'at' instead of 'in' 11 times (he was born 'at' USA) and 'on' 11 times. (You can stand 'at' the porch). They also wrongly used 'of' five times by using 'by' instead (houses are made 'by' stone bricks).

In terms of addition of prepositions, Thai EFL students had a tendency to add unnecessary prepositions after verbs which do not require prepositions in sentences such as 1) adding 'in' after verbs 'understand', 'mean', 'include' and 'change', 2) adding 'to' after verbs 'become', 'thanks', 'go there', and 'suit', 3) adding 'of' behind verb 'lack', 4) adding 'with' behind verbs 'solve', 'marry' and 'suffer', 5) adding 'for' behind verb 'go', 6) adding 'about' behind verbs 'discuss' and 'learn' and 7) adding 'on' behind verbs 'affect' and 'hit'.

In terms of omitting prepositions, "to" is the most problematic preposition for Thai EFL students, and there are two main errors of omitting 'to'. First, they tended to omit 'to' after verbs 'want', 'mean', 'listen' and 'is'. Second, 'to' needs to be placed after verbs such as 'study', 'come', and 'go' to form a pattern of transitive verb + object + infinitive with 'to'. For example, 'Ella did not want him to go'. Moreover, they failed to add 'of' after preposition 'because' to form a two-word preposition, and they omitted preposition 'of' after 'instead'. For instance, "'Tylenol' is a brand name that is used instead of the painkiller pill". Last, they also tended not to add the preposition 'in' after verbs 'compete' and 'for' after the expression 'thank you'.

In terms of L1 transfer, there is one vital problem for Thai EFL students found on the corpus, which is to write sentences by using direct translation from Thai to English. The errors from direct translation related to two related linguistic elements: semantic-related L1 interference and syntactic-related L1 interference. The former involves mismatch meaning between Thai and English prepositions, such as when English prepositions can be interpreted in Thai in multiple meanings, whereas syntactic-related L1 interference involves the difference in grammatical structure between Thai and English languages which can lead to errors in using English prepositions.

Table 4 The Interference of L1 toward Preposition Use

No.	Preposition	The Example Sentence of the Interference of L1
1	'in'	**Semantic related L1 interference** 1. Human are able to reflect *in* language. (on) 2. They understand *in* the same thing. (addition)
2	'to'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** 1. Antonymy can be categorized *to* two categories. (into) **Syntactic-related L1 Interference** 1. We don't want *them answer* you. (to, omission) 2. It becomes *to* a new word. (addition)
3	'of'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** 1. Animals have an ability *of* learning their language. (to) 2. This mean calling while driving is not the main reason *of* road accidents. (for) **Syntactic-related L1 Interference** 1. It is just a little word *because their* physical body. (of, omission) 2. There are 5 properties *of* the difference of human and animal language. (between)
4	'at'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** 1. He was born at USA. (in) 2. You can stand at the porch. (on)
5	'with'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** 1. Because they are paying attention with other things. (to) 2. A prince would marry with a woman. (addition)
6	'for'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** 1. $100 million has been spent for researching and developing a single genetically engineered variety. (on, misuse) 2. They hold the ceremony to thank you the God Sun. (for, omission)
7	'by'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** 1. The roof is built by bricks. (of) 2. You can be fined by doing nothing. (for)
8	'about'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** This writing will discuss about the different between them. (x, addition)
9	'on'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** 1. Her head hit on the floor. (x, addition) 2. The beautiful villages on the mountains of Europe are very stunning. (in)
10	'from'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** 1. One of the cases that was affected from these laws. (by) 2. The sweet smell from green leaves. (of)
11	'before'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** She prepares before teaching everyday. (for)
12	'between'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** Polysemy is the sameness of the meaning between the word. (of)
13	'since'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** Houses that were built since the 18th century. (in)
14	'through'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** He/She are walking through a dog. (pass by)
15	'among'	**Semantic-related L1 Interference** There is an ancient village that is located among the huge valley. (in)

Discussion

In this study, there were 21 prepositions that Thai EFL students wrongly used found in the concordance line. The most frequent misuse of prepositions were 'in', 'at', 'to', 'of', 'by', 'with', 'for' and 'from' respectively. The results of misuse of prepositions partly relate to the study from Thong-Iam (2016) who examined errors of English prepositions and prepositional phrases of Thai undergraduates. She found that English prepositions 'in', 'on', 'at' and 'to' were the most problematic prepositions and frequently misused by Thai EFL students. Moreover, study of Ruangjaroon (2015) reported that English prepositions 'at', 'for' and 'to' were frequently misused ranging percentage (%) of accuracy from 0% to 30% respectively. In this study, English preposition 'for' (6%) was in a lower rank of misuse of prepositions comparing to Ruangjaroon (2015). However, the obtained data could illustrate that Thai EFL students tended to have a difficulty in using basic English prepositions such as 'in', 'on', 'at', 'to' and 'for'.

The significant factors which cause errors in preposition usage by Thai EFL students involve differences between the Thai and English languages which can be linked to the contrastive analysis stated by Richards and Schmidt (2002). Contrastive analysis practitioners believe that native languages are highly influential factors causing errors in target language learning. They focus on differences in linguistic elements in both the mother tongue and the target language. According to the results, it can be implied that most EFL students' preposition errors come from the direct translation from their Thai native language. They tended to think of a Thai word and substituted with the English, which is considered as interference by their mother tongue language, as noted by Bennui (2008), who studied the interference of the Thai language on Thai EFL students. Moreover, the strategy of translating from Thai to English by Thai EFL students is relevant to the work of Chaiyaratana (1928), who identified the problem of Thai EFL learners in using English prepositions. He noted that Thai EFL learners tended to semantically translate English prepositions from one-to-one semantic mapping; e.g. 'in' can be interpreted in Thai as /nai/ and 'on' as /bəʊn/. However, English prepositions have multiple meanings; Ruangjaroon (2015) stated that they can be interpreted from one to many semantic maps. Therefore, they produced many errors in using English prepositions, particularly 'in', 'to', 'of', 'at', 'with', 'for', 'by', 'about', 'on' and 'from'. According to the results of Thai EFL students' written work corpus, two related L1 linguistic elements led to preposition errors: semantic-related and syntactic-related L1 interference. The former deals with the mismatch in meaning between Thai and English prepositions. English prepositions can have multiple meanings in Thai, e.g. 'on' can be interpreted as /bəʊn/, /nɑɪ/, and /thiː/ (Ruangjaroon, 2015). However, Thai EFL students tend to have a fixed meaning of this preposition, as previously mentioned. Thus, they often used 'in' instead of 'on', e.g. 'researching about something in the internet'. Furthermore, Thai EFL students tended to add 'in' at unnecessary places, such as 'we do not mean in what we say' (addition). This is because in the Thai language 'in' needs to be placed in order to make this sentence meaningful /rɑʊ mɑɪ dɑɪ mɑɪkwɑːm nɑɪ siːŋ tiː puː/ (English translation phonetics transcription: we do not mean in what we say).

Second, there is empirical evidence that syntactic-related L1 interference can also cause omission of English prepositions. This relates to the work of Bennui (2008 as cited in Watcharapunyawong and Usaha, 2013), who classified L1 interference into three categories; one of which relates to L1 syntactic interference. Bennui notes that the different structure between the mother tongue and the target language can cause errors in preposition usage. According to the results, Thai EFL students tend to omit the preposition 'to' in front of the infinitive in order to form a structure of subject + transitive verb + object + infinitive with

'to', such as 'the word dye means change the color' (to, omission).

Moreover, they also tended to make errors with two-word prepositions with one meaning, such as 'because of'. In the Thai language, 'because' is used to express cause and effect, as it is in English. However, the preposition 'of' is required to be added after 'because' if the following sentence is a noun phrase, such as 'we cannot go out today because of heavy rain'. Hence, Thai EFL students tended to make errors by omitting 'of', e.g. 'It is just a little word because their physical body' (of, omission).

After analyzing misuse of prepositions of Thai EFL students from the utilization of the AntConc, it could be concluded that concordance feature could effectively provide line by line costless investigation of errors of language used. It could be advised that Thai EFL students should reflect their writing mistakes by using the AntConc as Francis and Sinclair (1994) mentioned that data from corpus can present an incontrovertible evidence about how language is used by language students.

Conclusion

English prepositions are considered the most difficult elements for EFL students to utilize correctly and attain in a native-like manner (Chodorow et al., 2010). Tetreault and Chodorow (2008) also emphasized that the misuse of prepositions is the most typical type of grammatical error produced by EFL learners. The interference of the mother tongue is the most problematic factor to obstruct language learners acquiring correct English preposition use (Habash, 1982; Blom, 2006; Bond and Hayashi, 2006). According to the empirical evidence found in this study, there are two causes of L1 interference which lead to the misuse of English prepositions for Thai EFL students: mismatch meaning between Thai and English prepositions or semantic-related L1 interference, and syntactic-related L1 interference. Semantically, English prepositions are

not required in some cases, but in the Thai language a preposition must be used to make the sentence meaningful. Syntactic-related L1 interference involves the different structure between students' mother tongue and the target language causing preposition misusage. In summary, it is an English language teacher's responsibility to raise awareness of the difference between native and target languages for language students; Hyland and Anan (2006) noted that students' awareness of this difference may be particularly helpful for both Thai EFL teachers and students in terms of correct use of English prepositions in their written work. For further research studies, corpus-based analysis can be beneficial for language scholars to analyze language used and administer a classroom research from students who are at intermediate and advanced levels which might focus on different approaches of language learning such as constuctivism.

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