Problems and Needs in Writing Skills of Sales Support

Puttikorn Chitsakul, Silpakorn University, Thailand
Rin Cheep-Aranai, Silpakorn University, Thailand

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Abstract
In business communication, the English language is globally used for extending more business opportunities nationally and internationally. Sales support is one vital position that can assist increase profits for the company. One of their main English tasks is to perform writing skills in several documents. Even though, their English language skills is measured by score from proficiency test, those necessary skills for the job have not been directly examined. This study aims at exploring the problems and needs of writing skills of the newly-employed sales supports who directly report business information especially graph description to their employers. A direct writing test of graph description was designed and given to 30 new employees to signify the problems of their writing. The test was designed grounded on the review of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Besides, questionnaires were distributed to 15 employers to collect needs of the writing skills and problems they learned from the existing employees. The quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis. The results showed the problems and needs of the employees' writing skills in depth of grammaticality, content, lexical resources, and coherence and cohesion. As for the discussion and pedagogical implications, this research highlighted significant discussion of the findings and aspects to consider when designing a writing course for business organizations. It would benefit learners, teachers, related people in recruitment, management, and the business as a whole.

Keywords: Writing Skill, Sales Support, Problems, and Needs

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Introduction

For many countries. English been widely used as commonly spoken universally (Rajathurai, 2017) Additionally, it has become as a foreign or second language in different fields such as education, science, healthcare tourism, and business. It is used for communicating and exchanging ideas among people of different nations (Via and Smith, 1983). It can also foster human from different nations to interact in order to establish mutual understanding and extend connections with diverse communities (Rutherford, 1990). In business environment, the English language is commonly used in business activities such as making orders, discussion in meetings, company and product presentation, note taking in business training, communicating via email or telephone. Nowadays, most of international companies are basically required candidates and new employees to acquire intermediate level of English proficiency. According to Global English (2010), stated that the importance of English language in jobs. 74% of respondents answered that English is required. It is obviously seen, especially in sales activities, they need to communicate professionally with their international clients and foreign colleague (Gutjahr and Mahoney, 2009). Hence, both sales executive and sales support positions are in need to improve their business English to deal with international clients, attend international exhibitions, writing sales proposals, revenue report, and many more activities required in the Sales Department. Whereas the nature of a sales support is to own effective use of spoken language skills, report writing is the other key skill that is exploited as a daily basis. Apart from writing to track and motivate performance sales team (Segarra, 2012), its main purpose is to report numbers in various types of sales including periodic, promotional, and seasonal sales so that the sales and marketing are effectively analyzed. Report writing is vital for the management to adjust their strategies to be current and prevent the sales and opportunity loss. Without background knowledge in business, report writing in English is commonly perceived as a challenge for ESL/EFL learners. Moreover, the level of difficulty is increasing when a foreign language is related to task (Mohamed & Zuoaoui, 2014).

This study aims at investigating problems and needs in English writing skills of sales support in business environment. This research focuses on problems and needs of report writing with graph description that is beneficial for further recruitment in company.

Methodology

This survey research was purposed to investigate:1) the problems of graph description writing skills the sales supports, 2) the needs of graph description writing skills of the sales support.

In this study, data were collected from two groups of participants. The first group was 15 sales support supervisors. They were selected by random sampling technique from recruitment database of the recruitment agency company. The second group was 30 applicants to sales support position. They were selected by random sampling technique on the exam-and-interview date at the recruitment agency company.

Data Collection and Analysis

Two main research instruments were employed to examine problems and needs of the graph description writing skills of the sales supports. The first instrument was a descriptive writing test that was designed based on IETLS Writing Task 1 test. The criteria covered, content, word choice, grammatical errors, organization, and mechanics. The test was constructed for 30 sales supports to signify their problems on writing descriptive graph. The second instrument was the needs of graph description writing skills of sales support supervisors which was divided into three parts: personal information, open-and-closed ended questions related to content, word choice, grammatical errors, organization, and mechanics. This questionnaire was distributed to 15 sales support supervisors to rate their needs (scale of one to five) to write more explanation to clarify their points of views of their needs on writing descriptive graph. Both instruments were validated by expert in English language teaching fields.

The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS. The quantitative data were from the writing score of the test, which was analyzed by descriptive statistics. The criteria of scoring was based on the standardized test, IELTS Writing Task 1 test. Then, those grammatical mistakes were listed, coded, and categorized to illustrate the most errors occurred in sales support's writing skills as a qualitative data. After that, the data were quantified and reported with the examples of each criteria. The collected data from the sales support supervisors revealed the needs of graph description writing skills required from the sales supports. The sales support supervisors rated their needs of graph descriptive writing skills of for the sales in the parallel five categories namely grammatical structure, content, mechanics, word choice, and organization, respectively. The third analyzing is concerned about the evaluation of graph description writing skill of sales support compared with IELTS evaluation

Results and Discussions

This section discussed the results found from the two main instruments. The major findings revealed that 1) grammar was the main problem found in sales supports, and 2) content was addressed as the highest need of graph descriptive writing skills by the sales support supervisors. The detailed findings are discussed below.

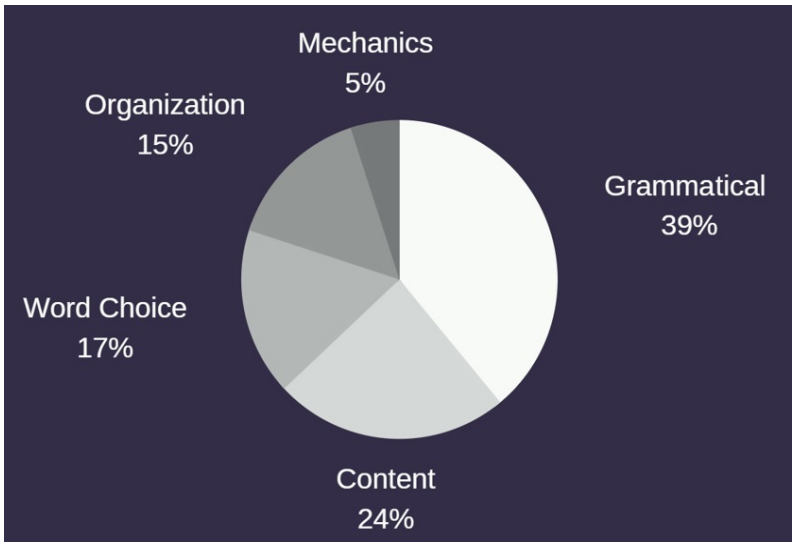

Figure 1: The problems of graph description writing skills of sales supports.

According to Figure 1, the pie chart represents the information about the problems of graph description writing skill of sales support. Grammar is the highest level of problems (39%) in graph description writing skills of sales supports. To elaborate, they were found in aspects of Inappropriate use of propositions, errors in the use of verb forms, and errors in the use agreements. Next to grammar, content (24%) was determined to be the second problems of the sales support's graph description writing skills. The common problems found included meaning constraints, redundancy of expression, and, divergence. Word choice was found the third major problem (17%), for example, mistaken uses of word choice and spoken form.

It can be explained that grammar has long been the pain points for all English language learners especially in Thailand, where English is used as the foreign language and scarcely used in daily lives. Content and word choice are the main features in making meaning for communication. When the learners do not have background knowledge in the content area—business issue in this case, it becomes a significant problem to their writing skills.

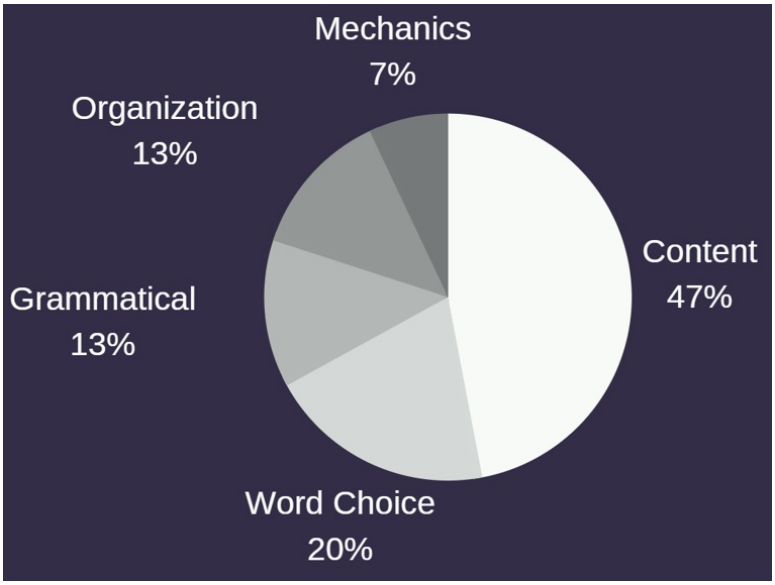

Figure 2: The needs of graph description writing skills of sales support supervisors.

According to Figure 2, the pie chart represents the information about the needs of graph description writing skill of sales support supervisors. They expressed their needs for the subordinates to improve content as the first priority (47%). Second to content was word choice (20%) that was rated of their needs. Moreover, the sales support supervisors rated grammar and organization (13%) equally as the needs after content.

Interesting information was shown between the most problematic writing skill of the sale supports and the most important needs stated by the sales support supervisors. That is to say, sales support supervisors reported that content was the primary need. In the same way, sales supports were examined to have content as the second problematic issue. It could be because the applicants for the sales support position had their background knowledge in business. As a result, they applied for this position. As for the sales support supervisors' most needs, it could be explained that their experiences in communicating with not only native speakers of English but also non-

native speakers of English. Thus, the content that convey key message and meaning is considered to be central points for successful communication rather than grammatical accuracy. However, the word choice and grammar are clearly seen as main features to make content accurate. Therefore, it could explain the reason of the following needs after the content.

Implications

The findings of the study highlighted that learners of English language especially in business have difficulty in grammar for their graph description writing skills. With this result, it can signal the learners and the teachers should work collaboratively to improve grammatical accuracy, which can make the content clearer and a more effective communication with correct mutual understanding. Otherwise, the incorrect interpretation from grammatical mistakes might cause severe damage in the business.

Another major concern is the content in the field of business. This is an important point for teachers and trainers who need to arrange English writing session for the learners. In other words, the results implied that multiple disciplinary is needed. Teachers should work across subjects in order to create an effective course. In this case, teachers of English and business should consult and work with each other for the benefit of the learners and the business.

Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating the problems in writing a graph description of the sales supports, and the needs of the writing skills especially in graph description addressed by the sales supervisors who are experienced in the work and in dealing with new employees. Data were collected by questionnaires and the writing test. They were analyzed by descriptive statistics and content analysis in order to gain both information in depth and breadth. The results showed that grammar, content, and word choice were the three main features of problems and needs, whereas mechanic was the least problematic and need. This study also indicated the pedagogical implications for the teachers and trainers that not only do they need to work with the learners to solve their language problem, but they also need to cooperate with business content teachers. So, they can design an English course for business sectors.

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Contact email: goggack_cooper@hotmail.com