

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION



1.1 Background of the Study

In the rapidly challenging world, i.e., impacts of globalization, the excess development of information technology and the impact of free trade and investment liberalization, the English language has been valued as a key to success in these challenges. In his opening speech at the Opening Ceremony of the RELC Seminar in 1996, His Excellency Mr. Sukavich Rangsitipol, Ministry of Education, Thailand and concurrently SEAMEC President emphasized the significant role of English, stating that due to the *tremendous economic boom in Southeast Asia* the English language cannot be treated as in the past when it was learnt as a foreign language for the few who (had) to interact with foreigners, and that we find ourselves today using English more and more to communicate...seen in this way, the English language is not really that detached and foreign (RELC Seminar Report, 1996: 5-6). Boonyavatana (1996:6) points out that English in Thailand is frequently not used with speakers from Kachru's Inner Circle because Thailand today has to face with *cross cultural communication between Thai and English-speaking people of different cultures, most of them are not even native speakers of English*. A significant role of English in Thailand, therefore, is not limited to be a foreign language, rather as an international language. Consequently, English has continuously and widely received scrutinizing attention and consideration in particular educational system.

In this era of increased globalization, the subsequent need to write in order to communicate via computer, the foreign language writing has no longer received a *secondary* position (Valdés et al. 1992: 333) when compared with listening, speaking or reading skills. Previous studies reported that the language ability was related to the writing ability (e.g. Cumming, 1989; Pennington and So, 1993; Sasaki and Hirose, 1996). Although writing in a foreign language might have proved extremely frustrating and difficult for the students in non composition courses, writing is hypothesized to be able to promote the development of language proficiency as well as writing ability (Homstad

and Thorson, 1996). The relatively few studies have investigated the role of writing in the development of EFL learners' language ability as well as writing ability in non-composition courses. Reinforcing the writing in a fundamental English course so that the learners could develop both English language ability and writing ability is, therefore, challenging.

The importance of language or grammar has long been established and emphasized. According to Palmer (1971:8), grammar is used to convey human thoughts. If there were no grammar, language would be chaotic (Batstones, 1994). Lack of grammatical knowledge can *severely limit* understanding and producing messages during communication (Purpura, 2004). Clearly, grammar cannot be separated from language. It is inevitable that to learn a new language (L2), learners need to know its grammar since grammar is not recognized as crucial for L2 learning, but is considered to be sufficient for learners to successfully learn a L2 (Rutherford, 1988).

EFL learners need teachers to facilitate effective grammar learning. The reasons concerning the constraints of learning English in the EFL formal context are:

1) EFL learners have few chances to take part in genuine interactions, and the created situations in the classroom setting aiming them to use English as a communication tool do not confirm the English knowledge and communication ability (Collentine and Freed, 2004).

2) Knowing only the forms and structures of English grammar is not sufficient since each form of grammar carries a particular meaning, and the use of certain linguistic forms has effects on the interlocutor's thoughts, attitudes, and points of view (Close, 1962). Without teachers who can see the distinctions between the forms and who can show the distinctions correctly by providing clear and obvious examples, learners must fully participate for many years in a communicatively rich environment (Close, 1962). Nevertheless, participating in such environment, the acquisition of certain linguistic elements is hardly acquired (Sato, 1986).

3) Learners' first language has an important impact on learning a new language. Learners in EFL contexts are those who have already acquire their native language and they possess partial knowledge of certain linguistic elements; they are influenced by

their first language experiences as reflected in their current state of language, or in their interlanguage (Kramsch, 1993, cited in Collentine and Freed, 2004). With the assistance of the teacher, the learner's interlanguage is developed (Terrell, 1991).

4) Many learners in the EFL contexts are the ones mostly involved in the educational system such as schools, colleges, and universities. They need a high level of proficiency and accuracy in order to be successful in their academic concerns and later in their professional careers. These groups of people are not non-literate; they are well-educated. They would be frustrated and annoyed if they realize they are not provided with an adequate opportunity to learn the formal aspects of the target language for a purpose of communication (Celce-Murcia, 1985).

Therefore, the English language as well as the need to communicate via writing is essential for the era of globalization. In an EFL formal learning context, teachers could facilitate learners' ability to communicate and enable learners towards a mastery of language efficiently through instruction.

1.2 Rationale

1.2.1 Early Investigation of Learners' Language

At Rajamangala Institute of Technology Suvarnabhumi (RMUTS) Nonthaburi, the learners basically need assistance with their English language knowledge. An initial investigation of students' previous written production including the writing assignments and the tests showed that some students could not write any grammatical sentences. Some could; however, they showed inconsistent linguistic element in use. Forty-six deviant sentences were taken from one group of students, and analyzed. It was found that the most frequent errors were the morphosyntactic errors (See. Appendix A1). The errors were then categorized into verb phrase (*i.e.* inflectional endings, tenses, aspects, word order, subject-verb agreements), noun phrase (*i.e.* determiner, adjective, noun), and preposition phrase (*i.e.* prepositions). The analysis indicated that the most frequent errors were the verb phrase (70%); followed by 26% the noun phrases; and 4% prepositional phrases (See. Appendix A2).

While an essential goal of teaching English in formal learning context is to develop the learners' language ability, previous studies reported that classroom instruction could not confer advantages on the learners. For example, Yunibandhu (2004) reported that the secondary school students who made the transition from the Thai schools to the international schools experienced language problems related particularly to their insufficient English proficiency. In-depth investigation reveals that the students possessed poor writing skills, and grammatical knowledge. The results also indicated that the effects included the educational disadvantage, weakened literacy and negative attitude towards their mother tongue, Thai, division from peers outside of the international school circle, and xenophobic attitudes towards Western students. In her study of the English proficiency of Thai students (Prapphal, 2001, cited in Chantarasorn et al., 2003) found that the English proficiency of Thai students was not as high as those of other nationalities, such as Singaporeans, Filipinos, Malaysians, Indonesians, Burmese, and Vietnamese. The average scores of the Chulalongkorn University Test of English Proficiency (CU-TEP) of graduates in the areas of sciences was 450, while that of graduates in the areas of social and humanities studies was 444. On the other hand, students who wanted to enroll for the international programs at Chulalongkorn University had scores averaging 489. The study also indicated that the English proficiency of graduates from Thailand was lower than the international standards required for graduate studies abroad or in international graduate programs in Thailand. The average TOEFL scores of graduates from Singapore and the Philippines were above 550, while those of graduates from Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma, Vietnam and Cambodia were above 500. The graduates from Thailand who wanted to further their studies abroad and those from Laos had an average TOEFL score of below 500. In the same line of study, Prapphal (2003) investigated the proficiency in 9,154 Thai graduates who already got their first degree from local universities and the results showed that the percentage of each skill was : 1) reading skill in science students was 39.20%, non-science students 36.85% and International program students 44.27%; 2) writing skill in science students was 37.10%, non-science students 36%, International program students 47.79% ; and 3) listening skill in science students was 32.95%, non-science students 31.57%, International program students 49.02%. The figure shows that their proficiency is not

high. Sritamai's (1988) empirical research on the grammatical ability of the post-high school students in Thailand reported that the linguistic ability was low: 58.85% of the subjects were found extremely low and 19.21% quite low. Chantarasorn et al. (2003) reported the results of analysis of the secondary school students before entering into a University using a standardized test – the Quick Placement Test Version II developed by Oxford University which was used to measure English proficiency – and found that the majority of students (48.7%) were ranged in lower intermediate level, followed by elementary level (26.4%), beginner level (13.6%), upper intermediate level (9.4%), and advanced level (1.7%). Angwatanakul (1975) analyzed the writing of the young adult learners at a Thai university. The subjects had studied English for more than eight years prior to study. The results were that the most frequent errors made by the students were the verb form, especially, the use of tenses, determiners and preposition.

The results of these studies seem to suggest that Thai students from the past to present days, at every level of study, have insufficient language or grammar ability, and thus their communicative ability such as writing ability. This has brought an awareness of how English could be learned more effectively.

1.2.2 Perspectives towards Language Learning Development

Due to the importance of grammar, a pedagogical method should be able to enhance learners' grammar ability since formal teaching has positive effect on EFL learners' language development (Ellis, 2001a; Lightbown, 1983; Pica, 1983; VanPatten, 1988). While one teaching concept – an effort to initially teach a single rule extensively at a time – has been widely used and popular for teaching grammar to EFL adult learners, the search for how grammar should be effectively taught has been attracted a great number of L2 researchers.

1.2.2.1 Role of Explicit knowledge in L2 Learning

One major force into this study is the stage development of skill learning. Anderson's (1993) three-stage model of skill-learning process consists of declarative stage, procedural stage, and automatized stage. At the declarative stage, rules and structures of language that is acquired can be described or declared. At the procedural stage, the learners acquire the knowledge of how to do things under certain

circumstances with the declarative knowledge. Thus, the procedural knowledge is developed as a result of use of declarative knowledge. When the learners use their procedural knowledge frequently, it becomes fully routinized, they, thus, reach the automatized stage.

This explanation has been affirmed by many researchers. For example, McLaughlin (1987) contends that the cognitive development requires the transition of the first stage development to the next. Anderson and Fincham (1994: 1323) maintain that the declarative knowledge is a *major avenue for that acquisition of procedural knowledge*. DeKeyser (1998) also reveals that learners develop the declarative knowledge first through some language-based activities. Before they can use it automatically in real communication, they need to possess this knowledge carefully through practice. When they reach the stage of automatizing, they may have lost their declarative knowledge. In pedagogical concerns Batstone (2002) suggests that apart from involving in *communicative context*, EFL learners need to attend to the language forms and take risks under teacher assistance of input and their output towards their goal of learning language in *learning context*. With the grammar teaching, then, the learners encounter opportunities for a multiplicity of grammatical structures (Ellis, 2005).

In this view, it can be assumed that explicit knowledge or the knowledge of rules and grammatical structures is basically necessity for L2 learning.

1.2.2.2 Critical Evaluation of Communication-oriented Instruction

The approach to teaching – the communicative language teaching – is an obstacle to acquisition of certain linguistic features. The principle of the CLT states that CLT pays less attention to explicit grammar teaching because the rules are inherent in each function of the language (Brown, 2000). It assumes that language learning is similar to the first language acquisition: it develops by getting involved in real-life communication and more meaningful activities. In a CLT context, meaningful and message-based activities are emphasized (Allen, 1983; Stern, 1992). Moreover, the learners would use the language automatically as a result of *the opportunity they are given to interpret, to express, and to negotiate meaning in real-life situations* (Savignon, 1983: vi). However, evidence from various studies provides strong support

Harley, 1998). Findings from various research studies showed that certain morphological aspects were not able to be acquired in meaningful communicative rich contexts (e.g. Sato, 1986; Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman, 1989; Harley and Swain, 1984; Swain, 1985). This weakness of the communicative language learning has led L2 researchers to recognize an interface of the language forms and meaning in an instruction.

1.2.2.3 Significance of Task-based Instruction

Task-based instruction (TBI) features communicative language learning and teaching. Many definitions have been given by many scholars. Among their definitions, some task features could be reflected as follows: 1) a performance objective (Prabhu, 1987; Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992; Willis, 1996; Bygate et al.; 2001); 2) real world activity where learners use language to communicate (Long, 1985; Skehan, 1998); 3) teacher intervention in the use of the target language (Prabhu, 1987); 4) context and working process that gears learners to the specific outcome (Breen, 1987); 5) learner participation in thinking processing, producing or interacting in the target language (Nunan, 1989); and 6) a focus on meaning rather than form (Nunan, 1989).

Though the TBI has been critical for not being able to develop certain language elements, how the TBI could enhance learners' grammatical ability is recommended by some scholars (e.g. Robinson, 2005; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996). Suggestions are to provide: 1) the planning time so that the learners can go back to their declarative knowledge stored in their memory; 2) the discussion time in which both teacher and learner could talk about their difficulties during task performance; 3) Willis (1996) clearly states that using grammar consciousness raising activities encourages learners to notice the gaps between their own output and the input provided; and 4) the cognitive complexity by sequencing tasks from easy to more difficult. This could facilitate accuracy of L2 production and promotes interaction as well (Robinson, 2005; Skehan, 1998).

Studies reveal that the use of task as well as a focus on form led to successful language learning (e.g. Brown, 1991; Fotos, 1994; Newton and Kennedy, 1996; Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Doughty and Varela, 1998; Long, Inagaki and Ortega, 1998; Macky and Philp, 1998; Skehan and Foster, 1999; Mackey, Gass and McDonough, 2000; Han, 2002; Yuan and Ellis, 2002). According to Willis (1996), the TBI

1996; Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Doughty and Varela, 1998; Long, Inagaki and Ortega, 1998; Macky and Philp, 1998; Skehan and Foster, 1999; Mackey, Gass and McDonough, 2000; Han, 2002; Yuan and Ellis, 2002). According to Willis (1996), the TBI also integrates all four skills moving from fluency to accuracy. This enables the integration of the focus-on-form for all four skills. What is now urgently needed is how to make the combination possible in an actual EFL language learning setting.

1.2.2.4 Interaction Hypothesis

Focus on form is originally based on Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, emphasizing on one type of interaction – negotiation of meaning. The principle is that interaction facilitates L2 learning by providing learners with negative evidence, drawing their attention to the forms of the language while meaning is also focused, and pushing them to produce modified output which they can notice the target language, to compare it with their interlanguage, and thereby produce grammatical accuracy (Swain, 1995).

Various studies show that when the learners expose to grammatical information with teacher's unobtrusive intervention, locating the forms and meaning, the dual ability – language ability and communicative ability – is developed (e.g. Carroll and Swain, 1993; Long, Inagaki and Ortega, 1998, Oliver, 2002; Han, 2002; Doughty and Varela, 1998).

Therefore, it is pedagogically possible to investigate the effects of form-focused activities in an actual classroom. This present study looks at an optimal way to integrate the form-based instruction into meaning-oriented communicative language teaching, namely the task-based instruction. The term form-and-task-based instruction or the FTBI has, therefore, been coined to represent the integration of the two in this study.

1.2.2.5 Psycholinguistics and Cognitive Process in Language Learning

The morpheme and syntax studies (e.g. Dulay and Burt, 1973, 1974; Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley, 1988) indicated that learners tended to follow a natural order and a sequence of target structure regardless the learners' first language or age. This suggests that the process of acquisition is not influenced by order of presentations or by the frequency in the input. An attempt to teach by heavily relying on the equation *what is taught equals what is learnt* could not lead to acquisition. The

delivery of a linguistically defined syllabus without the concern of learner internal syllabus might not be valid.

More importantly, the EFL learners and their difficulty in acquiring the target language have long been studied in order to explain why they could acquire some, not all linguistic features. Lado (1957:2) argues that *those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult*. In particular, Schwartz (1993:10, cited in Salaberry, 2000) clearly states that for non-native adult learners the acquisition of certain morpheme and syntax is very difficult, especially, the inflectional morphemes. This seems reasonably possible. The adult learners from Thailand, for example, could hardly acquire the English verb forms because Thai does not have inflectional endings, and Thai uses lexical items to express tenses and aspects while English has verb forms to signify tenses and aspects. Wongtip (1998) reports his result similar to other EFL studies that EFL learners can perform effective communication, if they possess sufficient grammar ability. This seems to suggest that there may be relationship between grammar ability and effective communication ability. Research on this area is very well-motivated.

Many studies related to psycholinguistics and cognitive theories have suggested that instruction incorporating psycholinguistic and cognitive factors has positive effects on L2 acquisition (Fotos, 1993, 1994; Pieneman, 1989; Tomasello & Herron, 1989; VanPatten and Cardinero, 1993). However, research on the effects of formal instruction on psycholinguistics and cognitive processes is very limited. How and why formal instruction assists effective and efficient L2 acquisition in the formal instruction has not yet clearly determined.

1.2.2.6 Feedback on Writing

How to assist the development of the target language through written feedback has been an issue of controversy because the research findings are mixed and inconclusive. The students have positive attitudes on grammatical correction (e.g. Hedgecock and Lefkowitz, 1996; Lee, 2005; Leki, 1991; Olajedo, 1993; Saito, 1994; and Wongsothorn, 1993); a caution has been made that teachers need to take account on the pedagogical effects (Brown, 1998: 253, cited in Lee, 2005) since it has been found that teacher's correction of grammatical errors is a waste of time (Kepner, 1991; Robb,

Ross and Shortreed, 1986; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992 and Truscott, 1996), more importantly, there are some drawbacks on the teacher's correction feedback on grammatical errors (Cohen, 1987; Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; Fregeau, 1991; Zamel, 1995) and some unfavourable effects of providing feedback on content (Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; Fathman and Walley, 1990; Fregeau, 1991; Leki, 1990). On the contrary, correction of grammar errors has been reported a successful strategy in helping the learners learn (Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003; Gascoigne, 2004). Explanation of the inconclusive results is made by Fathman and Whally (1990) that the students' improvement of content, length and grammatical accuracy results from the revision and rewriting process during which the students exploit their cognition in order to produce their complete work.

As a consequence of role of explicit knowledge, current cognitive and interactive perspective on L2 learning, it is well-motivated to discover whether or not the task-based instruction (TBI), the form-and-task-based instruction (FTBI), and the conventional instruction (CI) which accounts for explicit knowledge could provide contingent help to learners' grammar development, and thus, to communicative ability. So, these two current teaching methods are worth investigating. This is to compare which instructional treatment – the TBI, the FTBI or the CI would better enable the learners' grammatical ability to develop and also better enable the learners to apply their grammatical ability in communication, particularly, in writing.

1.2.3 Setting

The study was conducted at Rajamangala University of Technology Suvarnaphumi (RMUTS) Nonthaburi Campus, Nonthaburi, Thailand.

Generally, this institution provides diploma and bachelor's degree studies. Most studies in the diploma level are continually built up to the bachelor's degree studies. RMUTS Nonthaburi Campus mainly offers the students science, vocational and technical, and engineering studies in various fields, making them very unique. That is, most of the time of study, they attend their subject matter classes and they are extensively trained in the laboratories and workshops for their future career. By nature of the technologically based program, their motivation and opportunities to study language is much less comparing to the subject matters' studies. Regarding English courses, the

students are provided with 2 foundation courses when they are in the first year, diploma program. The English studies regarding teaching and learning context and the typical teaching instruction are elaborated below.

1.2.3.1 English Studies of the Technical Students

At RMUTS Nonthaburi Campus, the English learning is the requirement for all students. They have to take and pass two English foundation courses, namely, English 1 and English 2. The goal of both courses is similar, that is, to develop general English proficiency of students. Moreover, these two courses are prerequisite of other English courses in which the students have to take at their bachelor's degree program. The text book, created by the English department, is the functional and skill based syllabus. As for teaching the course, most instructors use a conventional instruction.

1.2.3.2 The Conventional Instruction

The conventional instruction at RMUTS Nonthaburi Campus appears to be the presentation, practice, and production model. In each unit, the example of the target language is presented in forms of either listening or reading text. The students then extensively practiced in controlled target language exercises. They also work in pairs in order to practice the target language extensively. Then, they work in a less controlled activity, which is generally the last main task, aiming to provide a new situation so that the students would exploit the learned target language. The lessons usually end with sentence writing or short paragraph writing generally assigned as homework. This teaching method has been used for years. The teachers are familiar and feel comfortable with it. However, research and change in teaching perspectives is needed if the language development in the learners is recognized as one of the major goals of learning English and this ability may be alternatively treated with new methodological approaches containing sound evidence-based cognitive and interactive theories.

Indeed, this study was to discover the effective ways to enhance the learners with grammatical information so that they can acquire a sound and accurate basis in the target language and derive benefit from collaborative and communicative activities that help promote their communicative ability. The conventional instruction has long been implemented. No studies explicitly conclude that it does not help the students to learn. Little empirical studies have been done so far to compare the task-based

instruction, the form-and-task-based instruction and the conventional instruction. In this study, the comparison is on the instructional effects on the students' grammatical accuracy of written production and learning achievement. Particularly, this study is motivated by the need to know the students' applicability of their grammatical knowledge to ability to write for communication as well as to see the relationship between their grammatical accuracy and their writing ability. Also, the students' attitudes towards the three teaching methods are investigated.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purposes of this study were as follows:

1.3.1 to compare the effects of the TBI, the FTBI and the CI on the students' English learning achievement and their effect sizes

1.3.2 to compare the effects of the TBI, the FTBI and the CI on the students' grammatical accuracy of written production and their effect sizes

1.3.3 to compare the effects of the TBI, the FTBI and the CI on the students' writing ability and their effect sizes

1.3.4 to investigate the relationship between the students' grammatical accuracy and their writing ability and its effect size

1.3.5 to survey the learners' attitudes towards the TBI, the FTBI and the CI.

1.4 Research Questions

This study focuses on the following questions:

1.4.1 Is there any significant difference among the English learning achievement of the students learning by the TBI, the FTBI and the CI? If so, how much are the effect sizes?

1.4.2 Is there any significant difference among the grammatical accuracy of written production of students learning by the TBI, the FTBI and the CI? If so, how much are the effect sizes?

1.4.3 Is there any significant difference among writing ability of the students learning by the TBI, the FTBI and the CI? If so, how much are the effect sizes?

1.4.4 Is the relationship between the students' grammatical accuracy and their writing ability significant? If so, how much is the effect size?

1.4.5 What are the students' attitudes toward the TBI, the FTBI and the CI?

1.5 Statement of Hypotheses

Four hypotheses were formulated to address the research questions one to four:

- Ho₁ On average, there is no significant difference among the achievement test scores of students receiving different treatments.
- Ho₂ On average, there is no significant difference among the scores based on grammatical accuracy of the written production of the students receiving different treatments.
- Ho₃ On average, there is no significant difference among the writing scores of the students receiving different treatments.
- H₁ There is a significant relationship between the grammatical accuracy and writing ability of the students.

As no previous studies have provided empirical evidence for the positive effect of one instructional method over another instructional method, all the hypotheses are formulated as null hypotheses. The alpha level for testing the four hypotheses was set a priori at the .03 level of significance in case of non-parametric tests and .05 level of significance in case of parametric tests.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This experimental study will take place in three classrooms of one compulsory English course, namely English I, for the first-year diploma technical students. It focuses on the three methodological treatments. The scope of the study is as follows:

The population for the findings to be generalized is about 700 first-year diploma technical students at RMUTS, Nonthaburi campus.

1.6.1 The independent variable is the teaching method with 3 levels: the TBI, the FTBI and the CI while the dependent variables are the subjects' scores in the writing tests, their scores in the achievement test, their scores in the grammatical accuracy on the writing tests and their attitudes. The relationship between the students' grammatical accuracy and the writing ability is established using data from three writing tests.

1.6.2 The content of the teaching material in this study covers the actual course description of English I designed for the diploma technical students.

1.6.3 The duration of the experiment is one academic term lasting 17 weeks altogether. Two weeks are for mid-term and final examination. Fifteen weeks are for the teaching and learning. The teaching time of each week is 3 hours per one class, so the total teaching time for this study is 45 hours.

1.7 Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of the study were as follows:

1.7.1 It was assumed that though the subjects were cognitively different, and the teaching methods were different, they could learn as required by the course objectives.

1.7.2 It was assumed that the subjects were willing to participate in this study.

1.7.3 It was assumed that the subjects answered the questionnaire truthfully.

1.7.4 Since some non-parametric tests were used in this study because of a small sample size, their test powers are generally less than parametric tests (Henkel, 1976). To solve the mentioned problem, $p = 0.03$ was used for $p = 0.05$ in such cases and it was assumed that they were comparable.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study are as follows:

1.8.1 **Individual differences.** Since the sample selection relies on the equivalent of English proficiency of the between-group individuals only, individual differences among

subjects such as motivation are not used as a criterion in selecting the samples prior to the study. So, conclusions of this study are drawn based mainly on statistical analyses.

1.8.2 Sampling method. This study utilizes cluster random sampling method since it is conducted in an actual learning teaching situation. Although the group distribution is already tested and found as normal, any unknown error of sample distribution might have an effect on the statistical generalization to be made.

1.8.3 Sample size. According to Henkel (1976: 82), the size of sample is a significant component of the power of the test, *power increasing as sample size increases*. The sample size of this study is as small as 30 which is a minimal size that the test would allow. Therefore, any generalization based on this study is limited and must be done with caution.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

The key terms in this study are defined as follows:

1.9.1 Task-based Instruction (TBI) refers to a teaching method which provides students with a set of meaningful and real world tasks where the attentional focus of students is on the communication prior to accuracy. The TBI requires the students to work through the following process:

1.9.1.1 Gathering information. Students gather information by listening to or reading from available resources, do activities which help them activate topical and background information;

1.9.1.2 Performing the task. Students work collaboratively in groups or in pairs in order to complete the task, write the first draft to report the outcome of the task, rehearse before the presentation; and

1.9.1.2 Analyzing or identifying errors and practicing the target language. The teacher and students analyze or identify the errors found during teacher-student interaction/student-student interaction and from the student first draft. The forms that are perceived to be problematic for students are the target forms to be practiced in

grammar consciousness-raising activities which are used explicitly to improve the knowledge of an aspect of language, and their accuracy in processing it. The last activity is the rewriting.

1.9.2 Form-and-task-based Instruction (FTBI) refers to a teaching method which provides students with a set of meaningful, real world tasks where the attentional focus of students is on communication with an occasion of treatment of target forms that have been analyzed to be problematic for them. The FTBI is similar to the TBI, except that the target language forms are treated while the meaning is also focused. The FTBI treats the language implicitly using focus-on-form activities which are intended to increase the salience of the target forms. They are as the following aspects:

1.9.2.1 Textual enhancement. The text is enhanced by bolding, capitalizing or underlining the target forms. The enhanced forms derive from either the actual errors found in student first drafts or the unit objectives.

1.9.2.2 Reactive focus on form. An occasion where the occurrence of errors is treated during the teacher and student negotiation of meaning. Lyster and Ranta's (1997) patterns of corrective feedback are applied (See. Appendix B). They are repetition, recast, clarification request, elicitation, translation, metalinguistic feedback, and explicit correction. Each is provided during dialogic negotiation by the teacher.

1.9.2.3 Written feedback on form. The teacher's treatment to the linguistic errors appeared in the student first draft in order to encourage students revise and rewrite it. It marks grammatical forms (graphological forms, lexical forms, and morphosyntactic forms) at the sentential level and the discourse level (cohesive form, information management form e.g. word order, parallelism) by indication using correction codes which is an implicit feedback, tapping with comment on the problem areas of content and organization. After this, the students are provided with time to reflect their performance focusing on both form and content. The last activity is the rewriting.

1.9.3 Conventional Instruction (CI) refers to a presentation-practice-production (PPP) model that involves the students in, first of all, learning the new target language

(grammar and vocabulary) explicitly and analytically through pre-modified input – listening and reading. Then the students learn the target language explicitly and analytically and practice the target language by the controlled activities to less controlled activities. The students enact in the task in order to produce an outcome deriving from the requirement from the task but there is no teacher intervention during the task performance. The CI provides the students with time to reflect their problems based on the teachers' grammatical correction in their writing. The last activity in the CI is the re-writing. In this study, the task will be the same as the main task used in the TBI and the FTBI classes.

1.9.4 Task refers to a series of communicative activities with specified course objectives involving learners in using language pragmatically and strategically, requiring an application of existing and new knowledge, and involving any of the four language skills in order to achieve an outcome. In this study, each unit comprises one main task and each task is designed to fit the objectives of each unit.

1.9.5 Grammatical Accuracy refers to the correct use of grammatical form per T-unit in the student writing tasks (See. Appendix C). The grammatical forms refer to graphological forms, lexical forms, and morphosyntactic forms. T-unit or minimal terminable unit is the shortest unit which a sentence can be reduced to, and consisting of one independent clause together with whatever dependent clauses are attached to it (Richards et al., 1992). During the tests, the students produce their writing independently. The grammatical accuracy is calculated by dividing error-free T-units by T-units in their writing production. Note that accuracy is analyzed for ten subjects who are purposively selected based on their percentile rank. The ones who were below the percentile of 25 are marked as the low students. The ones who are above the percentile of 75 were mark as the high group. After grouping, each group is randomly selected (three high, 4 average and three low). As the one class selection is completed, the matched pairs from the other two classes are automatically selected. Therefore, there are thirty subjects altogether, and then the accuracy is compared to see the difference of the paired subjects as well as the group difference.

1.9.6 Writing ability refers to the capability to produce good pieces of writing which are evaluated by writing rubrics. A specific writing rubric is used to measure the quality of each piece of writing. Each is specifically designed on the basis of the course content and a task performed. The rubric contains six components of good writing – content and ideas, organization, voice, vocabulary, cohesive and coherence, and grammar. They are equally weighed.

1.9.7 English learning achievement refers to an attainment of a student English learning as stated in the pre-specified objectives of an English course. They are to develop the students' four language skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The growth in a student's attainment is to be tested by an achievement test. The test construct follows the course objectives. To ensure the quality of the test, prior to the study the test was validated by consulting three experts and tried out with a group of representatives of the population who were not the ones participated in the main study. The test result is used to indicate the level of attainment each student reaches, and to point out the learning development, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the method of teaching. The learning achievement is tested in the last week of the semester. Therefore, this test is an immediate post test since it is a measure of the effect of formal instruction after the treatment is finished.

1.9.10 Explicit knowledge refers to analyzed and metalinguistic knowledge of individuals; they have conscious awareness of its rules and structures when the language is put into use. This type of knowledge enables an ability to edit or monitor the language production consciously and accurately. In a classroom setting, for example, when a teacher presents to the students the "forms" of the language, the students are learning explicit knowledge. The term 'explicit knowledge' is used as a synonym for 'learnt knowledge' and 'declarative knowledge' (See. Section 2.2.4.4).

1.9.11 Implicit knowledge refers to the ability of use language for communication in real time constraints. This type of knowledge is available for automatic use. In contrast to explicit knowledge, implicit knowledge can not be learned but can be acquired through use. For example, when the students are provided with an opportunity to interact with more able peers without an awareness of rules, structures or the

correctness of the language, they are using their implicit knowledge. The term 'implicit knowledge' is a synonym for 'procedural knowledge' or 'acquired knowledge' (See. Section 2.2.4.4).

1.10 Significance of the Study

This present study was to contribute to the development of the effects of formal instruction by incorporating the cognitive based perspectives, *i.e.*, noticing and attention, consciousness-raising activities, focus-on-form, role of explicit knowledge, and the interactive-based perspective, *i.e.*, task-based instruction, interaction hypothesis, to the truly complex language learning in classroom settings. This study has some implications for language teaching.

The study provides ESL/EFL teachers with:

- 1) Alternative approaches to the treatment of grammar already supported by sound evidence-based pedagogical theories.
- 2) Evidence that may affect their own belief in teaching grammar
- 3) Factors that influence the student's writing ability.
- 4) Awareness in becoming independent consumers of theoretical suggestions made by applied linguists or researchers who conduct their studies in different

This study provides a powerful source of motivation, the significant data and the replicable framework useful for further activities in order to extend the studies for better understanding of the highly complicated nature of language learning of EFL adult learners.

1.11 An Overview of the Study

In this chapter, the background of the problem, *i.e.*, the importance of English, the needs to write in the increased globalization, and the constraints of learning English in the EFL context, has been reviewed. The rationale and the unsolved problem – the students' language and writing ability related to the development of certain areas of

morphosyntactics, the interactive and cognitive perspectives in L2 learning – are mentioned. The purposes of the study as well as the questions to be investigated and answered are established. Four statements of hypotheses, scope of the study and the assumption of the study are followed by the operational definitions of terms. This chapter presents the readers with the limitations of the study prior to any generalization to be made.

Chapter 2 reviews the instructional effects of formal instruction on language learning. The traditional, cognitive and interactive perspectives relating to traditional instruction, task-based instruction and focus-on-form are reviewed by focusing on the effects they have on students' L2 development. Then, how the instruction could enhance EFL writing ability is reviewed. The chapter ends with a review of students' attitude towards L2 learning and the semantic differential scale.

Chapter 3 describes the experimental design which is a matching-only pretest-post test comparison group design. In this chapter, the instructional design is reviewed. It also explains the selection of subjects and the instrumentation involving one achievement test, three writing tests and a set of questionnaire. Data collection, data processing, and data statistical analysis are also described.

Chapter 4 presents the findings with respect to the evidence for five research hypotheses posed in the study. Interpretation of the statistical data is explained together with the related sub-analysis and the factual information such as results from descriptive analysis.

Chapter 5 starts with a brief summary of everything covered in the first three chapters. This chapter discusses the results of the testing of the four hypotheses formulated. The issues examined are related to English learning achievement, accuracy of written production, writing ability, the relationship between accuracy in writing and writing ability, and students' attitude on the instructional treatment. After the implication of the study, the chapter is concluded with a brief recommendation.