# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present (1) rationale and statement of the study, (2) purposes of the study, (3) research questions, (4) scope of the study, and (5) significance of the study.

## 1.1 Rationale and Statement of the study

For non-English native speakers, writing is generally regarded as the most difficult skill to master (Celce-Murcia 2001, p.206). To improve writing skills, one needs training and experience (Brown 2001, p.334). In spite of tremendous progress in English writing teaching skills, students do not seem to have benefited as much as expected. Grammatical and lexical inaccuracies are liable to spoil their interesting ideas (Ferris 2002, p.328).

Olshtein (2001, p.227) claims that the mechanics of writing are particularly important at the initial stage of learning otherwise in future students cannot become successful writers. Error awareness helps students establish a good basis in sound-spelling correspondence, which is important for effective skills of reading and writing and also for good pronunciation. Carefully planned teaching of

writing combined with the mechanics of writing and the composing process can serve the learner well at the early stage of language learning.

Research in teaching of writing, according to Penaflorida (2002, p. 356) she reveals that if the teacher takes the responsibility for the correction of all errors at the beginning, there will no sign of improvement in students' writing.

With this problem, Reid (1993, p.233) explains that students for whom English is not his or her native language are limited in their repertoire of strategies for correcting their writing. It is therefore the teacher's task to prepare students for self-sufficiency. The benefit of developing editing strategies will certainly vary for students, it depends on learner variables plus the teacher's knowledge and experience in teaching grammar, and the writing context.

Frodesen (2001, p.245) suggests that students should be encouraged to explore different strategies to find out what serves them best. The attention on form is not just about errors but resources for communication goals. In addition, the students must have strategies to deal with feedback and error correction. They should realize the importance of the editing stage, that it is the time for them to digest, to

practice corrections, and the opportunity to verify the correctness by themselves.

Many writing scholars have investigated the appropriate tools or approaches to enhance student's abilities working with correctness, namely: self-monitoring technique, modeling, conferencing, and editing checklists. Among several correction strategies, the editing checklist seems to be a potentially useful tool to help develop students' writing.

Editing refers to the process of detecting and correcting grammatical, lexical and other errors before producing a final paper. The checklist has a list of students' most frequent errors at an appropriate language level for students' mastery.

By working in a very humane way that is by providing a clear procedure for editing, the editing checklist can save the teacher valuable time, help students correct their own mistakes, and make them shoulder their own responsibilities in their writing. It becomes the first step to promote learning autonomy of the students. As a result, students will be able to enhance their ability of self-editing (Penaflorida 2002, p. 344) and bring them into the good habit of re-doing their work independently (Ferris 2002, p. 334).

Additionally, training in the use of self-editing checklist may help to promote 'learner-oriented' or 'student-centered' education, which is a major issue in learning reform in Thailand. According to the National Act B.E. 2542 (1999), learning reform is at the heart of all concerned. As stated in Section 22. "Education shall be based on the principle that all learners are capable of learning and self-development, and are regarded as being most important. The teaching-learning process shall -aim at enabling the learners to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potential."

The use of the editing checklist process was derived from classroom research when the researcher was a teacher at this school (Thasatoi Municipal School). While she was teaching there, she found out that the students' previous knowledge in the mechanics in English writing such as the use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling and of course grammatical elements was limited. In fact this level of students should learn more complicated English structure as required by the national curriculum. As a teacher, I realized that this was my responsibility to provide them a guideline. Because with mechanics of English writing it is obvious to see the errors, I thought that it would be valuable if we provided them with something like a handbook for helping them in basic errors before moving to the next step. I believe

that with the guideline provided to students, they would be able to change their perception that only teacher can do error-correction but they can as well. Furthermore, it might be time for the teacher to teach English grammar by combining the mechanics of writing with the other skills or classroom activities, not teaching them in isolation.

The six-year experience of the researcher in teaching secondary school students made her realized that the students tend to passively shift the task of error correction to the teacher. As a result, the students rely on teacher's correction without understanding. When the teacher asks them to self-edit, they show reluctance to edit their paper. Finally, they do not pay attention to their own papers. I therefore read many books, articles, and research talking about how to encourage student self-editing. Most of the books suggest the use of the editing checklists for teaching students self-editing. It was felt that it might be a useful tool for my students. Before selecting this topic for my research, a pilot project was carried out on the reaction of the use of editing checklists with two ninth grade students. Working with one girl and one boy from different classes, the result revealed positive feedback. This study therefore aims to take this further and explore the use of the editing checklist process in a Thai classroom.

## 1.2 Purposes of the study

1. To compare the number of errors counted in the areas of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling before and after training in the use of an editing checklist process.

2. To explore the relationship between initial student writing ability and the ability to use the editing checklist process.

3. To investigate the students' reaction to the editing checklist process.

## 1.3 Research questions

In order to meet the purposes of the study, the research questions were identified as follows:

1. Does training in the use of an editing checklist result in an improvement in the areas of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?

2. What is the relationship between initial student writing ability and the ability to use the editing checklists?

3. How do the students' react to the editing checklists?

## 1.4 Scope of the study

**Subjects**

33 students from a class of ninth grade, Thasatoi Municipal school who studied Fundamental English in the first semester of 2004 were involved in this study.

**Seven-day lesson plans**

The seven-day lesson plans were carefully designed in order to match the level of students, school syllabus of the Fundamental English 3 of 2004 academic year including the expected outcome of the national curriculum. The English national curriculum for basic education is comprised of four strands, namely:

**Strand 1.** Language for communication. Its aims are to enable students to understand, exchange information, present data, share thoughts and feelings on given situation both oral and written form.

**Strand 2.** Language and Culture. Students should have knowledge and understanding of life, society, and norms through the target language including the similarity and differences between Thai language structure and Thai culture versus English language and culture.

**Strand 3**. Language and relationship with other subjects. English will be used as basis to search for new knowledge integrating with other subjects.

**Strand 4**. Language, Community and World relationship. Students should have English competency, it is to be basic knowledge for occupation and life-long learning.

The content of teaching and materials were adopted from many textbooks such as *Trio 3* by Paul Radley and Alan Sharley (2001), *Go for it* by David Nunan (2000), and *Expression 3* (2001) by David Nunan.

## 1.5 Significance of the study

This study provides an evaluation of an alternative correction strategy to enhance student's abilities in self-editing. It assesses the effectiveness of an editing checklist and gives an indication of whether that editing checklist can help students develop competence in mechanical / grammatical aspects of writing. The study also gives information about the practicalities of this method of developing editing skills in the Thai school classroom.