



# Error Analysis on Subject-Verb Agreement and Verbal Inflection in English Syntax of EFL Learners: A Case Study of Wang Klai Kangwon Campus's Freshmen

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**ABSTRACT-** Error analysis is a crucial approach for the systematic analyzing of deviations from English grammar for the students who learn English as a foreign language (EFL). This study is conducted to investigate the errors occurring on Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA) and verbal inflection in English writings of Thai EFL learners at the tertiary level. It employs both the quantitative and qualitative methods with the frequency and percentage value. The data are collected from 45 pieces of English writings written by Wang Klai Kangwon Campus's freshmen at Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin, Thailand, during the first semester of the 2020 academic year by purposive sampling. In the error analysis process, the data are analyzed on SVA and verbal inflection by rules of English SVA (Carter & McCarthy, 2006), verbal inflection processes (O'Grady et al., 1989), and surface structure taxonomy error characteristics (Duley et al., 1982).

The results of this study reveal that the SVA and verbal inflection errors in freshmen's English writings are occurred in both morphological and syntactic levels. In morphological level, the verbal inflection errors are occurred by misapplying the correct inflectional suffixes and the correct suppletion form of verbs. The frequency and percentage of errors by misapplying the correct inflectional suffixes are higher than those of the errors on verbal inflection. In syntactic level, SVA errors are occurred by misusing the correct lexical verb forms and the correct copular "be" forms. The frequency and percentage of errors by misusing the correct lexical verb forms are higher than those of errors by misusing the correct copular "be" forms. In addition, there are other errors caused by the interference of the students' mother tongue, Thai language, namely Pro-drop and Serial Verb Construction, have induced the students to make the mistakes on writing the correct English sentence structures. These interferences significantly lead to the errors of SVA as well as verbal inflection in English. In conclusion, all errors of SVA and verbal inflection found in this study reveals that Thai EFL learners require the knowledge of both morphological and syntactic levels of English relating to SVA and verbal inflection in order to fulfill their English writing efficiency.

**Keywords:** Subject and Verb Agreement (SVA), verbal inflection, Error Analysis, English morphology and syntax, EFL learners

## I. INTRODUCTION

Subject-Verb Agreement, henceforth SVA, in English is the rules that govern sentence formation in English. It is the knowledge that the native speakers of English have to enable them to generate the grammatical English sentences. As English is an inflectional language, the native speakers of English intuitively use two levels of language knowledge, morphological and syntactic levels in order to construct a grammatical sentence. The knowledge of English morphology such as a choice of word formation with an inflectional suffix of verbs plays an important role to form a correct SVA in the syntax. In addition, the correct arrangement of subject-verb-object word order in English sentence structure will provide the information to fulfill the SVA rules.

The students, who learn English as a foreign language, henceforth EFL, committed both morphological and syntactic errors in writing English sentences. For the morphological error, Yordchim & Gibbs (2014) found that Thai Business English juniors had a high number of errors on English noun, verb, and adjective inflection. The students misused the correct inflectional suffixes of a verb in SVA as well as the inflection verb forms indicating tenses or aspects. For the syntactic error, Haran & Sufian (2018) indicates that the Bangladeshi undergraduates had SVA errors with the third person singular, third person plural, and compound subjects in present simple tense sentences. The students failed to attach a plural suffix, -s or -es, to a singular verb, which is required to agree with its singular subject because they had hardly noticed the singularity or plurality form of the subject. The findings of Haran & Sufian seem to show the connection between the knowledge of morphology like word formation with suffixes and the knowledge

of syntax like an agreement between a verb and its subject in number and person as the necessary knowledge for writing the grammatical English sentences.

English is taught in Thailand as a foreign language from kindergarten to university level. General English course (ENL1001) is a compulsory course in which the Business English freshmen at Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin (RMUTR) need to enroll as a prerequisite of other English courses in the first semester of the academic year. According to the objective of this course, learners are aimed to use vocabularies to construct English sentence structures in several contexts (Business English Curriculum, 2018). Thus both English morphology and syntax are vital to be taught in this course. As Surina & Kamaruzaman (2009) have mentioned, English grammar rules are important for EFL learners to master, but most of them still have problems with SVA in their writings. Besides, Stapa (2010) suggests that obtaining learners' SVA errors would help teachers to decide which action needs to use in learning and teaching English language. This study then aims to find out SVA and verbal inflection errors in RMUTR freshmen's English writings at the beginning of the course in order to help the teacher to develop the suitable teaching methods for strengthening the students' weakness with essential knowledge for constructing grammatical English sentences.

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

It is hypothesized that SVA and verbal inflection errors committed by Business English freshmen might indicate the lack of English morphological and syntactic knowledge for constructing grammatical English sentences. Hence, this study is aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of SVA and verbal inflection errors based on rules of SVA, verbal inflection, and surface structure taxonomy in the freshmen's writings?
2. Which types of SVA and verbal inflection errors in the freshmen's writings have the highest frequency and percentage?

### PURPOSE

The objective of this study is to analyze the errors on English SVA and verbal inflection based on SVA rules, verbal inflection, and surface taxonomy as well as their frequency and percentage in the paragraph writings of the Business English freshmen of Wang Klai Kangwon Campus at RMUTR, Thailand.

### RESEARCH SCOPE

The error analysis in this study is focused on SVA and verbal inflection errors in the Business English freshmen's paragraph writings in the General English course during the first semester of the 2020 academic year.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### SVA in English Syntax

In English, SVA is the rule of grammar in which a subject is concordant with a verb used in a sentence: a singular subject takes a singular verb, a plural subject is followed by a plural verb (Harun & Sufian, 2018). Basically, SVA is one of the important grammar rules to form sentences and utterances in English with two main principles: an arrangement of items (syntax), and structure of items (morphology) (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 405). When forming a sentence "He buys me new toys.", it is evidently created by words, aspects of the individual words, and the way they arranged to interpret the meaning of the sentence. It is combined with the small items or words in different meanings and functions such as he, me, the present form of the verb 'buy' with the inflectional suffix -s, a plural -s ending called grammatical morphemes. These small items are arranged in a sentence structure e.g. a subject comes before a verb in an English statement, an indirect object comes before a direct object, and so on.

In addition, verb phrases give different kinds of information in English sentences such as tense, aspect, and voice. Firstly, they indicate tenses, which give information about time. For instance, 'He walks.' (present tense) versus 'He walked.' (past tense). Secondly, they also indicate aspects that give information about the speaker's perspective on time: 'He has walked.' (perfective aspect) versus 'He was walking.' (progressive aspect). Lastly, they indicate voice, whether it is an active: 'I wrote a letter.' or a passive: 'A letter was written by me'.

In terms of tense and aspect, they are combined with a verb in the verb phrase. The tense is presented on the main verb unless it is a modal. All subsequent verbs have non-tensed formed such as present participle (-ing form) or past participle (-ed form), or infinitive (Carter & McCarthy, 2006). Even though the combination of a verb with tense and aspect in English verb phrases happens in the syntactic level, it

definitely relates to verbal inflection, which is in the morphological level. O'Grady et al. (1989) proposes that English is an inflected language, which has eight inflection affixes. These affixes modify word's structures to mark the grammatical subclass to which it belongs. Particularly, there are five inflectional suffixes related to this study: 1) the inflection mark of plural nouns by adding the inflection suffix -s or -es 2) the inflection mark of past verb subclasses by adding the inflectional suffix -ed to indicate the past tense, 3) the inflectional mark of a singular verb agreeing with the third person singular subject by adding the inflectional suffix -s or -es in the present tense, 4) the inflectional mark of present participle by adding the inflectional suffix -ing to a verb to indicate the progressive aspect, and 5) the inflectional mark of past participle by adding the inflectional suffix -ed to a verb to indicate the perfect aspect.

Moreover, analyzing verbal inflection errors in this study employs rules of a notion of English verbal inflection (O'Grady et al., 1989) with two categories: 1) Person and Number Agreement: the verb is formed by adding the inflectional suffix -s or -es and used only for the third person singular in the present tense, except for commands, and 2) Tense: it specifies the time of a situation with reference to the moment of speaking as past, present and future. For English tense system, regular verbs are marked by the inflectional suffix-ed in the past tense while the non-past verb is unmarked. Besides, there are some irregular verbs with suppletion form by replacing one verb root with another verb form to express an inflectional contrast in the past tense such as is-was, are-were, go-went, steal-stole. However, in terms of inflectional morphology, errors in the future tense would not be analyzed in this study because it is formed with the free morpheme 'will' or 'shall'.

Owing to the overview of the studies mentioned above, errors analysis on SVA and verbal inflection in English sentence structures involved a relation between the structure of verbs in verb phrases and the sentence structure that verb phrases are in. Thus there are two kinds of language knowledge concerning SVA, which are morphological and syntactic knowledge, following the fact that verbs in English sentence structures varied in tenses, aspects, and voices, which are restricted to English SVA rules.

#### **Error Analysis (EA)**

Errors are complex phenomena in learning a target language. They are involved in language competence occurring by learners' lack of knowledge (Corder's, 1967). Therefore, error analysis would help the teacher to expose learners' learning process system and lead to a study of learners' errors in any language skills (Brown, 1980).

In this study, error types of surface structure taxonomy (Duley et al., 1982) have been adapted for analyzing characteristics of SVA and verbal inflection errors in English sentences. In terms of the surface structure errors, it consists of 1) Omission: it is characterized by missing a unit which is formed in a well-formed structure of verb phrases and sentences, 2) Addition: it is characterized by adding of a redundant unit which doesn't occur in verb phrases or sentences, and 3) Misinformation: it is characterized by applying a wrong form of morphemes in verb phrases or sentence structures.

#### **Error Analysis on English SVA of EFL learners**

There are some previous studies of errors analysis on EFL learners' writings that relate to this study. First, it is found that EFL students have had a high level of errors on verb forms, tenses, and SVA in their English writings which caused by the interference of mother tongue language (L1) and lack of knowledge about English verbs in sentence structures that vary in tenses and aspects, both SVA and word formation (Karim et al., 2018; Al-Tamimi, 2018; Sermsook, et al., 2017 & Waelateh, et al., 2019). Second, the EFL students used wrong English verb forms which are not agreed with their subjects in the present tense because they barely identify the number of those subjects (Karim et al., 2018). Similarly, Bunnarong, et al. (2018) found that Thai Business English freshmen had high errors on verb agreement with the subjects that are collective nouns, nouns ending with a suffix [-ics], and countable nouns. These findings show that the EFL students require more knowledge of morphological process of English verbs, inflection, as well as nouns, derivation, in order to accomplish the correct SVA structures.

Besides, Waelateh, et al. (2019) indicated that Thai undergraduate students made the most errors on the syntactic level in their essay writings by using incorrect verb forms, missing copular verb 'be', applying incorrect concord of verbs, and adding the auxiliary "be" before a lexical verb in the present simple tense. And in the morphological level, they used suffixes excessively. However, Thapthimhin (2015) found that Thai undergraduates have positive results on verb agreement which is agreed to the subject with modification such as "pasta from fine Italian food factories, and "many ancient cultures", but not with irregular nouns such as the singular noun with -s ending "news", and the plural noun without -s "police" because they have incomplete knowledge of word formation and non-target-like syntactic information

with the irregular nouns. These results show the relation between morphological and syntactic errors on SVA structures by using the wrong verbal inflection in the verb phrases, leading to the incorrect SVA.

According to the overview of error analysis studies above, it shows that EFL learners have difficulties to form English word structures as well as SVA structures in different tenses and aspects. Errors on English verbal inflection and SVA in the previous studies occur on verbs with an incorrect inflectional suffix, so it fails to meet the agreement with its subject. Furthermore, it also found that errors on English SVA and verb inflection are caused by L1 interference besides the lack of knowledge about affixation and sentence structures in various tenses and aspects.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

This study has adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methods with five steps adapted from Sridhar (1980: 222): 1) collecting the data from the RMUTR freshmen's writings, 2) identifying errors on SVA and verbal inflection in the spreadsheet, 3) classifying the characteristics of SVA and verbal inflection errors, 4) explaining those error characteristics based on the SVA rules, the verbal inflection, and the surface structure taxonomy, and 5) quantifying the error types by frequency and percentage.

#### Samples

This study has operated a purposive sampling method. The samples are the forty-five paragraph writings of the Business English freshmen, the faculty of Business Administration at Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin, Wang Klai Kangwon Campus that enrolled General English course (ENL1001) in the first semester of the 2020 academic year.

#### Research Instrument

The research instrument is the spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel that is used to classify error types and error characteristics of SVA and verbal inflection in English sentences based on the verbal inflection (O'Grady et al., 1989), the surface structure taxonomy (Duley et al., 1982) as well as the rules of SVA (Carter & McCarthy, 2006).

#### Results

There are three parts in the results topic. The results of the errors on SVA and verbal inflection in the freshmen's writings are described in the first two parts. The first part shows the SVA error types, including their characteristics. In the second part, errors on verbal inflection based on the rules of SVA, the verbal inflection, and the surface structure taxonomy, with their samples are presented. Both errors can be categorized as Misinformation, which is characterized by applying a wrong form of morphemes in verb phrases or sentence structures (Duley et al., 1982). Besides, there are some other errors in the data that relate to the causes of the errors found in the first and second parts. Those errors are described in the third part.

#### 1. Errors on Subject-Verb Agreement

The SVA rules in English syntax require that the number of the subject must agree with the number of a verb in the present simple tense sentence. There are two different numbers of a subject in English: singular e.g. a boy, a team, etc., and plural e.g. two boys, the contents, etc. If a subject is a singular, the verb must be singular too. If the subject is plural, the verb must be in a plural form. According to English morphological process, a plural verb form is the same form with the base root form e.g. walk, study while a singular verb form needs a suffix -s or -es to attach with its end, for example, walks, studies, etc. In order to satisfy English SVA rules, a singular form of a verb "studies" agrees with its singular subject as in (a) while a plural verb form "study" agrees with its plural subject as in (b).

(a) A boy studies English.

(b) These two boys study English.

It is found in this study that the SVA errors are characterized by misapplying the correct lexical verb form or the correct copular "be" forms, which needs to be agreed in number with its subject in the present simple tense with two error characteristics: misapplying the correct lexical verb form and misusing the correct form of copular "be".

The SVA error characteristics with their samples are as the followings:

## 1.1 Misapplying the correct lexical verb form

There are two types of errors in applying the correct lexical verb form, which are misusing a singular verb form and applying a wrong type of a verb form.

### 1.1.1 Misusing a singular verb form.

There are two kinds of errors in using a singular verb form: a verb does not agree with the third person singular subject and a verb does not agree with a collective noun subject.

#### 1.1.1.1 A verb does not agree with the third person singular subject.

The students misuse a singular verb form that needs to be agreed with the third singular person or a singular noun subject.

**For example,** \* It **make** me feel happy when I eat it.

A verb “make” is the incorrect present lexical verb form in the present simple structure. The student used a plural verb form “make” instead of a singular verb form “makes” to agree with a singular subject “it”. In English present simple sentence, if the subject is a third person singular, the verb must be in a singular form. In this sentence, a third person pronoun subject “it” requires a singular verb form “makes”, which is the base root verb plus a suffix-s, in order to agree with it. The correct sentence would be: It **makes** me feel happy when I eat it.

#### 1.1.1.2 A verb does not agree with a collective noun subject.

The students use the incorrect singular verb form that does not agree with a collective subject which is treated as a singular subject.

**For example,** \*My family **like** to travel.

A verb “like” is the incorrect present lexical verb form in the present simple structure. The student used a plural verb form “like” instead of a singular verb form “likes” to agree with a collective noun “my family”. In English present simple sentence, if the subject is a singular, the verb must be singular too. In this sentence, a subject is the collective noun “my family”, which is considered as a singular subject, so a verb should be in a singular form “likes”, which is the base root verb plus a suffix-s, in order to agree with it. The correct sentence would be: My family **likes** to travel.

### 1.1.2 Applying a wrong type of a verb form.

The students apply a wrong type of a verb form by applying the present participle verb form instead of the present simple verb form.

**For example,** \* I always **listening** to music and eat some snack.

The student used the present participle verb form “listening” instead of a simple verb form “listen” to agree with its subject “I”. In English present simple sentence, there is an agreement in number between a subject and a verb. If the subject is a plural, the verb must be plural too. In this sentence, a subject is the first person pronoun “I”, which is considered as a plural subject, so a verb should be in a plural form, which is in the same bare form as the root verb, in order to agree with it. The correct sentence would be: I always listen to music and eat some snacks.

## 1.2 Misusing the correct form of a copular “be”.

The students use the incorrect form of a copular “be”, which does not agree with its subject.

**For example,** \*My hobbies **is** listening to music, playing badminton.

The copular “be” form “is” is an incorrect plural form in the present simple structure. The student used a singular verb form “is” instead of a plural verb form “are” to agree with a plural subject “my hobbies”. The copular “be” links the subject with its complements, so it must agree with its subject in number and person. In this sentence, a plural form of a copular “be” must be used to agree with a plural subject “My hobbies”. The correct sentence would be: My hobbies **are** listening to music and playing badminton.

In brief, the SVA errors, which are found in the freshmen’s writings, show that the students lack knowledge of word formation, namely inflection and completion, in order to accomplish SVA in English sentences.

The SVA errors are presented by their frequency and percentage in the table 2 below.



**Table 2: Results of the frequency and percentage of SVA errors, including their error characteristics**

Levels of Linguistic	Surface Error	Error Characteristics	Frequency of Errors	Percentage
<b>1. Syntax: Errors on Subject-Verb Agreement</b>				
<b>1.1 Lexical verb</b>		<b>Total of misapplying the correct lexical verb form</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13.60</b>
		<b>1.1.1 Misusing a singular verb form.</b>		
	<b>Misinformation</b>	<b>1.1.1.1 A verb does not agree with the third person singular subject. For instance, * It make me feel happy when I eat it. (It makes...)</b>	8	5.44
	<b>Misinformation</b>	<b>1.1.1.2 A verb does not agree with a collective noun subject. For instance, * My family like to travel. (My family likes ...)</b>	2	1.36
	<b>Misinformation</b>	<b>1.1.2 Applying a wrong type of a verb form. For instance, * I feeling enjoy, listen to music after go home. (I feel...)</b>	12	8.18
<b>1.2 Copular be</b>		<b>Total of SVA errors on copular be</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8.84</b>
	<b>Misinformation</b>	<b>1.2. Misusing the correct form of a copular "be". For example, *My hobbies is listening to music, playing badminton. (My hobbies are...)</b>	13	8.84
		<b>Total of SVA errors</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23.80</b>

According to the results of SVA errors in the table 2, the total of SVA errors in the freshmen's writings is 35 or 23.80%. All of the errors are Misinformation, which is the wrong form of the verb in a sentence. The SVA errors on the lexical verb are the highest percentage, which is 13.60%. These SVA errors are caused by the students' lack of knowledge of an inflectional suffix of the verb that indicates the agreement with a number (singularity or plurality form) of a subject in English present simple sentence.

## 2. Verbal inflection errors

The results of verbal inflection errors in English syntax are found with two error characteristics: misusing inflectional suffixes and misapplying the correct form of suppletion. The error characteristics of verbal inflection and their samples are as the followings:

### 2.1 Errors on misusing inflectional suffixes

This error type is related to misusing the correct inflectional suffixes on the verb which indicates tense or aspect in English sentences. Three error characteristics of misusing correct inflectional suffixes are found: 1) incorrect form of regular verbs with the inflectional suffix -ed in the past tenses, 2) incorrect form of past participles in perfect aspect, and 3) incorrect form of present participles with the inflectional suffix -ing in progressive aspect.

#### 2.1.1 Misusing the correct form of regular verbs with the inflectional suffix -ed in past simple structure.

In the past simple structure, the regular verb is normally formed by adding the inflectional suffix -ed to the base verb such as walked, played. The students have made this error characteristic most frequently by misusing the correct verb form of regular verbs with the inflectional suffix -ed for the past verb form. **For example**, \*I **graduate** from Huahin school. The student failed to use the correct past form of the verb "graduate". In the correct past form of a regular verb "graduate", it must be added with the inflectional suffix -ed as "**graduated**". The correct sentence would be: I **graduated** from Hua Hin School.

#### 2.1.2 Misusing the correct form of past participles with the inflectional suffix -ed in perfect aspect structure.

The student misapplied the correct form of past participle for the verb "work" in the perfect structure. **For example**, \* I have **work** baristas at Inthanin Café. In the correct perfect aspect form, the verb that follows the auxiliary 'have' must be in the past participle form, that is a root verb added with the inflection suffix -ed, "**worked**". The correct sentence would be: I have **worked** as a barista at Inthanin Café.

#### 2.1.3 Misapplying the correct form of present participles with the inflectional suffix -ing in progressive aspect structure.

The students have misapplied the correct progressive structure by using a plural form of a verb without an auxiliary “be”. **For instance**, \*Now I **study** Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin campus. In the correct progressive aspect form, the root verb with the inflectional suffix -ing “**studying**”, must follow the auxiliary “be”, which is agreed to the first person pronoun “I”. The correct sentence would be: Now I am **studying** at Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin campus.

## 2.2 Errors on misapplying the correct form of suppletion

In the past simple form, some irregular verbs are formed by suppletion, which is the word formation that replaces one root verb by a different form of a verb such as be – was/were, sleep-slept, etc. There are two error characteristics: misusing suppletion forms of a main verb and misusing suppletion forms of an auxiliary verb.

### 2.2.1 Misusing suppletion forms of a main verb.

The students have misapplied the correct suppletion form of a main verb. **For example**, \*I **take** money from mom last week. The student still applies the plural present tense form of the main verb “take” instead of the suppletion past form “took”. The correct sentence would be: I **took** money from mom last week.

### 2.2.2 Misusing suppletion form of an auxiliary verb.

The students have misapplied the correct suppletion past form of the auxiliary “do”.

**For example:** \* I **don’t** play that before.

In the correct structure, the suppletion past form of the auxiliary ‘do’, which is ‘**did**’ should be applied. The correct sentence would be: “I **didn’t** play that before”.

In summary, two error types of verbal inflection are found in the freshmen’s writings, which are misusing the correct inflectional suffixes and misapplying the correct form of suppletion. These errors are caused by the students’ lack of knowledge of word formation, both inflection and suppletion to indicate the correct tenses or aspects of the verb in English sentences. The frequency and percentage of verbal inflection errors are presented in the table 3 below.

**Table 3: Results of the frequency and percentage of verbal inflection errors including their error characteristics**

Levels of Linguistic	Surface Error	Error Characteristics	Frequency of Errors	Percentage
<b>2. Morphology: Verbal inflection errors</b>				
<b>2.1 Inflectional suffixes</b>		<b>Total of Errors on misusing inflectional suffixes</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23.80</b>
		<b>2.1 Errors on misusing inflectional suffixes</b>		
	<b>Misinformation</b>	<b>2.1.1 Misusing the correct form of regular verbs with the inflectional suffix -ed in past simple structure.</b> <b>For example, *I travel a lot last year because of golf tournaments. (travelled)</b>	22	14.96
	<b>Misinformation</b>	<b>2.1.2 Misusing the correct form of past participles with the inflectional suffix -ed in perfect aspect structure.</b> <b>For example, * I have work baristas at Inthanin café. (worked)</b>	2	1.36
	<b>Misinformation</b>	<b>2.1.3 Misapplying the correct form of present participles with the inflectional suffix -ing in progressive aspect structure.</b> <b>For example, * Now I study Business English. (am studying)</b>	11	7.48
<b>2.2 Suppletion</b>		<b>Total of Errors on misusing of suppletion forms</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13.60</b>
		<b>2.2 Errors on misapplying the correct form of suppletion</b>		
	<b>Misinformation</b>	<b>2.2.1 Misusing suppletion forms of a main verb.</b> <b>For example, * Last year I taken a gift from my</b>	19	12.92

		friends. (took)		
	<b>Misinformation</b>	<b>2.2.2 Misusing suppletion form of an auxiliary verb.</b> <b>For example,</b> *It was so surprise I can play saxophone but I <b>don't</b> play that before.	1	0.68
		<b>Total of verbal inflection errors</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>37.41</b>

According to the table 3, the total of verbal inflection errors in the freshmen's writings is 55 errors, or 37.41%. Like the SVA errors, all of the verbal inflection errors are Misformation, which is the wrong form of the verb in a sentence. The verb inflection error by misapplying the correct inflectional suffixes is the highest percentage, which is 23.80%. The percentage of an error on the correct suppletion form is also high, which is 13.60%. However, the error on the suppletion forms of a main verb is higher than the error on the suppletion form of the auxiliary verb. These errors are obviously caused by the students' lack of inadequate knowledge of using the inflectional suffixes as well as the correct suppletion forms to indicate the past tense and aspects of verb in English sentences.

### 3. Other error types relating to SVA and verbal inflection errors

Besides the errors on SVA and verb inflection, this study found the other error types that relate to the SVA structures and verbal inflection on verbs in English sentences. There are two characteristics of errors, which are errors on misapplying correct declarative sentence structures and errors on omitting the copular verb 'be' in a declarative sentence.

#### 3.1 Errors on misapplying correct declarative sentence structures

There are four characteristics of errors on misapplying the correct declarative structures, which are 1) missing a subject or a lexical verb in a sentence, 2) adding an auxiliary verb 'be' before a lexical verb in the present simple structures, 3) omitting the auxiliaries 'be' and misapplying the correct form of present participle in the present progressive structures, and 4) omitting the auxiliary 'have' and misusing the correct form of past participle in present perfect structures.

##### 3.1.1 Missing a subject or a verb in declarative structures

In a declarative structure, a subject comes before a verb or a predicate, which can be either a noun or a pronoun such as 'He loves spicy papaya salad'. The students have misapplied the correct declarative structure by missing the subject and using the incorrect form of the main verb.

**For example:** \*now am want good English for future me and son.

The student misapplied the correct form of declarative sentence by omitting a subject and putting the verb to "be" before a main verb in the base form. A subject is required in every grammatical English sentence, including the declarative structure. In this sentence, a subject would be the first person plural pronoun "I" so a verb follows it must be in a plural form, in this case "want". Besides, another infinitive form of the copular 'be' is needed before an adjective "good". The correct sentence would be: "Now **I want** to be good in English for myself and my son in the future".

The cause of errors on misapplying the correct declarative sentence structures comes from the interference of the students' mother tongue, Thai language. Firstly, Thai is a pro-drop language in which it exhibits highly frequent use of null pronouns without the involvement of agreement morphology (Phimsawat, 2011). Consequently, the students omit a subject in writing an English declarative sentence. Secondly, Thai students faulty apply the serial verb structure when writing an English declarative sentence. According to Sudmuk (2005), there are eight types of serial verb construction in Thai in which a series of verbs can occur in set. In this case, the students used an adjective "good" in English without an infinitive verb 'be' before it because this word in Thai is a verb,  $k\epsilon\exists:N$  "good", and it stays behind another verb in a serial construction as shown below:

cha $\partial$ n t $\square$ ↓:Nka:n k $\epsilon\exists$ :N pha:sa:aNkr $\cup$ t

I want good English

"I want to be good in English."

Lastly, the inexistence of an auxiliary verb "be" in Thai language caused Thai students to omit "be" in an English sentence.

##### 3.1.2 Adding an auxiliary verb 'be' before a lexical verb in the present simple structure.



The students have made this error type most often by adding an auxiliary verb 'be' before a lexical verb in the present simple structure.

**For example:** \*I'm always spend the time with my stepsister.

The students misuse the correct form of declarative present simple sentence by adding the auxiliary verb "be", "am", before the main verb "spend". In the declarative present simple structure, the lexical verb must agree with its subject. In this sentence, the plural verb "spend" should be used to agree with its subject, the first person pronoun 'I'. The correct sentence would be: **I always spend** the time with my stepsister.

### 3.1.3 Omitting the auxiliaries 'be' and misapplying the correct form of present participle in the present progressive structures.

The student misused the correct form of the present progressive structure by omitting the auxiliary 'be' and present participle verb form.

**For example:** \*Now I study Business English.

The student omitted the auxiliary 'be' which must be agreed with the first person subject "I" and used the plural verb 'study' instead of the present participle form with the suffix -ing "studying". In the present progressive structure, the auxiliary 'be' must precede a present participle verb form, and the auxiliary 'be' must agree in number with its subject. In this sentence, the plural verb form of an auxiliary 'be', "am", is required to agree with its subject, which is the first person plural pronoun "I". The lexical verb "study" that follows an auxiliary 'be' should be in the present participle form as "studying". The correct sentence would be: Now I **am studying** Business English.

### 3.1.4 Omitting the auxiliary 'have' and misusing the correct form of past participle in present perfect structures.

The students misapplied the correct form of present perfect aspect by omitting the auxiliary 'have' and misusing the correct form of past participle.

**For example,** \*I ever work in hotel.

The student omitted the auxiliary 'have' that must agree with its subject "I" and used the plural verb "work" instead of the past participle. In the past perfect structure, the auxiliary 'have' must precede a past participle verb form and the auxiliary 'have' must agree in number with its subject. In this sentence, the plural verb form of an auxiliary 'have' is required to agree with its subject, which is the first person plural pronoun "I". The lexical verb "work" that follows an auxiliary 'have' should be in the past participle form as "worked". The correct sentence would be: I **have** ever **worked** in a hotel.

### 3.2 Errors on omitting the copular verb 'be' in a declarative sentence

The students have misapplied the correct declarative present simple structure by omitting the copular 'be' before an adjective or noun complement.

**For example,** \*I play games when I sad.

In the correct structure, the copular verb 'be' must agree with its subject. In this sentence, the plural form of the copular be, "am", is required to agree with its subject, the first person plural pronoun "I". The correct sentence would be: I play games when I **am** sad.

The results of the other error types relating to SVA and verbal inflection with the frequency and percentage are presented in the table 4.

**Table 4: Other error types relating to SVA and verbal inflection errors**

Levels of Linguistic	Surface Error	Error Characteristics	Frequency of Errors	Percentage
<b>3. Syntax &amp; Morphology: Other error types relating to SVA and verbal inflection errors</b>				
<b>3.1 Incorrect declarative sentence structures</b>		<b>Total of errors on misapplying correct declarative sentences</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>32.65</b>
		<b>3.1 Errors on misapplying correct declarative sentence structures</b>		
	<b>Omission</b>	<b>3.1.1 Missing a subject or a verb in declarative structures. For example, *now am want good English for future me and son. (Now I want to be good...)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10.20</b>

	<b>Addition</b>	<b>3.1.2 Adding an auxiliary verb 'be' before a lexical verb in the present simple structure. For example, * I'm always spend the time with my stepsister. (I always spend...)</b>	20	<b>13.60</b>
	<b>Omission &amp; Misinformation</b>	<b>3.1.3 Omitting the auxiliaries 'be' and misapplying the correct form of present participle in the present progressive structures. For example, *Now I study Business English. (I am studying Business English.)</b>	10	<b>6.80</b>
	<b>Omission &amp; Misinformation</b>	<b>3.1.4 Omitting the auxiliary 'have' and misusing the correct form of past participle in present perfect structures. For example, *I ever work in hotel. (I have ever worked in a hotel.)</b>	3	<b>2.04</b>
<b>3.2 The copular be in declarative sentences</b>		<b>Total of errors on omitting the copular verb 'be' in a declarative sentence.</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6.12</b>
	<b>Omission</b>	<b>3.2 Errors on omitting the copular verb 'be' in a declarative sentence. For example, * I play games when I sad. (I play games when I am sad.)</b>	9	6.12
		<b>Total of other errors types</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>38.77</b>

According to the table 4, errors on misapplying the correct declarative sentence structures is the highest percentage, which is 32.65%, and then errors on omitting the copular verb 'be' in a declarative sentence is 6.12%. Both of them involve three kinds of errors, which are misformation, addition, and omission.

A significant cause of errors on misapplying the correct declarative sentence structures comes from the interference of the students' mother tongue, Thai language, which leads to SVA errors as well as verb inflection errors in English sentences. In English present tenses, the first verb is required to be agreed to its subject in number and person. When the students have omitted a subject or a verb, it caused errors of verb agreement and errors on the verb phrases with verbal inflection.

It is worthy to note that the errors on word arrangement in sentence structure and wrong word choice are also found as shown in the error type 3.1.1. It seems that the students also lack the knowledge of English morphology, which leads to both SVA and verbal inflection errors.

In conclusion, the results of SVA and verbal inflection errors found in the freshmen's writings have occurred in both morphological and syntactic levels. In morphological level, the verbal inflection errors are occurred by misapplying the correct inflectional suffixes and the correct suppletion form of verbs. The frequency and percentage of errors by misapplying the correct inflectional suffixes are higher than those of the errors on verbal inflection. In syntactic level, SVA errors are occurred by misusing the correct lexical verb forms and the correct copular "be" forms. The frequency and percentage of errors by misusing the correct lexical verb forms are higher than those of errors by misusing the correct copular "be" forms. In addition, there are other errors caused by the interference of the students' mother tongue, Thai language, namely Pro-drop and Serial Verb Construction, have induced the students to make the mistakes on writing the correct English sentence structures. These interferences significantly lead to the errors of SVA as well as verbal inflection in English.

The results from this study evidently show that Thai EFL students require both knowledge of English morphology and syntax to form correct forms of English words in accordance with SVA structures. Therefore, it would be useful for EFL teachers to provide both knowledge of English morphology and syntax in their teaching plan in order to improve the students' English writing to be more effective.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study is analyzed the common errors SVA and verbal inflection in English morphology and syntax of Wang Klai Kangwon's Business English freshmen's writings. The results of the study reveal that the Business English freshmen lack both knowledge of English morphology and syntax to form the correct SVA structures. The results also indicate that SVA and verbal inflection errors occurring in both morphological and syntactic levels. The highest percentage of SVA errors is misapplying the lexical verb

form that is not agreed to a singular verb with the inflectional suffix –s or –es, and the highest percentage of verbal errors is misusing the correct inflectional suffixes on the verb phrases to indicate the past tense or aspects in English syntax.

There are two significant causes of the error on SVA and verb inflection found in the freshmen's writings. First, the students have the negative transfer between the components in English language itself, that is the students lack the knowledge of SVA, verbal inflection, and sentence structures to form the grammatical English sentences (Al-Tamimi, 2018; Sermsook, et al.; 2017 & Yordchim & Gibbs, 2014). Second, Thai students transfer the system of Thai structure into English sentence structures such as SVA, verbal inflection, tenses, aspects, etc. (Thapthimhin, 2015).

For the cause of the negative transfer between the components in English language itself, EFL students require both knowledge of English morphology and syntax to form the correct SVA structures. First, forming correct SVA structures requires the English morphological knowledge of singular or plurality form of a subject which needs the agreement with the singular or plural verb form to satisfy a rule of SVA (Karim et al., 2018 & Bunnarong, et al., 2018). Second, the knowledge of the syntax of English sentences such as word arrangement in a sentence is also required for forming correct SVA structures.

Based on the findings of this study, some recommendations for further studies are suggested as the followings. Firstly, this study was conducted only one major of the freshmen at RMUTR, Wang Klai Kangwon Campus so that the findings of this study could not be generalized to the entire population of Thai university students. In order to increase the extensive study is recommended such as students from other different majors or other universities. Secondly, the results of the study are shown as the essential evidence to apply the knowledge of morphology and syntax to form English sentences in EFL learning and teaching. So the future study should be discovered how this teaching method is applied to Thai EFL learners.

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